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OR,

The Second Round in San Francisco.

The Romance of a Baffling Mystery.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF EIGHTY "DEADWOOD DICK"
NOVELS; ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

OPENS THE DRAMA.

DEADWOOD DICK, JR., passed along Kearny street with rapid strides.

He appeared to be looking for a certain number, and glanced at a paper he had in hand.

Presently he stopped short, before the open doorway of a building, and looked at the signs there displayed, of which there were several.

AS KODAK KATE DARTED OUT, THE PRISONER ATTEMPTED TO SEIZE HER, BUT THE HEAVY DOOR WAS SWUNG TO WITH A CLANG.

One of these bore the words:

"KINCARTH & KINCARTH.

"LAW OFFICE."

"This is the den I am looking for," Dick said to himself.

Taking mental note of the number of the room indicated, he thrust the paper into his pocket and went in.

Springing lightly up the stairs with his firm, athletic step, he turned to the right and was soon at his destination, where, on the door, the sign was again to be seen.

Opening the door, he stepped within, to find himself in a well furnished and nicely appointed office, and also standing within a railed inclosure.

Right at hand, at a small desk, was a small boy, while further away at another desk sat a man with a remarkably bald head. It was entirely innocent of any sign of hair anywhere.

Another desk, opposite this one, was vacant. These things Deadwood Dick saw at first glance. The man with the bald head looked up, seemingly with one eye only, but made no other move. The small boy, however, was off his chair immediately and at the railing.

"What shall I say for you?" he asked.

"Is that gentleman Mr. Kincarth?" Dick inquired.

"That is one of him, sir," was the peculiar answer.

Dick looked at the small boy in a half-amused way. He certainly could see it was not two of the man.

"I mean to say this is Mr. Samuel, sir," the boy further enlightened him, in response to his questioning look. "Mr. Daniel is out."

Again the man at the desk glanced up with one eye, but without moving his head or seeming to look up from his work.

"Well, just hand the gentleman this note. He will understand, I guess," and he handed the boy the paper at which he had looked as he came along the street, which was addressed to himself and had come from this office.

"Yes, sir," and the boy darted across to where the man of the bald head was seated.

Samuel Kincarth glanced at the note thus delivered into his hand, and then looked up with both eyes and favored Dick with a momentary stare.

"Admit him," he directed the small boy, "and place a chair."

Back to the railing the boy darted, touched a spring and opened a gate in it, and then flew to place a chair for the stranger near the lawyer's desk.

Deadwood Dick had entered, now, and sat down as the lawyer waved his hand toward the chair.

"Mr. Richard M. Bristol?" the lawyer questioned.

"That is my name, sir. I am here in response to your note, which reached me none too soon."

The lawyer was a man of sixty years, evidently; but keen-eyed and alert as many men at half his age. He had already given Dick a thorough scrutiny.

Dick had done the same with respect to "Mr. Samuel," and had formed his estimation of him. It was not an unfavorable one.

"You were going away, then?" the lawyer remarked.

"I was already starting, sir. Another minute, and your note would not have found me."

"Lucky it was in time, then. I inquired of the police, found where you were located, and sent at once. I want your services, as my note informed you."

"And I am here to lend them, as you see," smiled Dick.

"But we are strangers to you. I hardly hoped you would come."

"Since I have, though, what is the case you want me to take hold of?"

"Just a moment before we enter upon that, sir. You are a peculiar man, and I would know more about you."

"Very well; ask what you will," Dick invited.

"You say you were going away—had already started. How was it that a note from utter strangers had power to lead you to change your mind?"

Deadwood Dick smiled, sadly perhaps.

"My life is devoted to hunting crime and criminals to exposure and justice," he explained. "It needed but the mention of a mysterious murder to bring me to take a hand in the business of finding out the murderer."

"Now I begin to understand you. You see, sir, your recent case here in San Francisco has awakened interest in you. The moment this

crime came to our notice, I said to my partner: 'Daniel, the man we want is this Deadwood Dick, as he is called.'"

"Well, you have got me," Dick assured, "so make use of me. Give me the story of this crime of which you speak."

"I will proceed to do so. You will notice that I speak in cautious tones, and I see that you are doing the same. Let us continue to observe that caution. It is one of the rules of our office, when a client is present on business. Now for the story. Perhaps Daniel will be in by the time I am done. You must meet Daniel before you go away."

"I should like to see him, of course."

"Daniel and I are one, sir. When you have occasion to call, no matter which of us is here, it is all the same. What is known to one is known to the other. As I said, we are one."

"Which your office boy seems to understand pretty well, I imagine."

The suggestion of a smile lighted the lawyer's face.

"Oliver Upp is a strange boy," he observed. "He says strange things. But, I see you are impatient for the case. Lend me your attention."

"Here in San Francisco, until yesterday, lived two old maiden sisters, rich, one about eighty years of age and the other four years older. Now one, the younger, lies cold in death, the victim of an assassin's knife."

"These old ladies were peculiar people, and were as nearly alike in all things as it was possible for them to be. They dressed the same, and had the same ideas upon all points save one, which I will refer to presently. They lived in a quiet way upon a quiet street, and had one servant.

"Yesterday morning the younger sister was found dead in her bed, with the wound of a knife in her breast. She was discovered by her sister, who ran screaming into the hall, calling for the servant. At the head of the stairs she fainted, and there the servant found her. She in turn took up the cry, ran out of doors and notified a policeman; and so the crime was made known."

Deadwood Dick was listening attentively.

He rather liked the old gentleman's way of presenting the facts of the case.

Mr. Kincarth paused for a few moments, as if to get the subject in hand as he wanted it, and presently resumed.

"You will naturally inquire about this servant," he went on. "She is an elderly woman, nothing under fifty-five, I should say, and has been in the employ of the sisters for years. No suspicion whatever can attach to her. She is as deeply affected by the death as the sister herself. No need to say anything more about her, as you will probably agree."

"I have said that these two old ladies could agree upon every point save one, and that was, the manner in which they were to dispose of their fortune at death. You see, their property was held by them jointly, by a complex point of law, and if they desired to make a will it had to be made jointly or it would be invalid. That is to say, neither could make a will independent of the other while both lived. Such was the law upon that particular case."

"Now the bone of contention between them was a grandnephew whose name is Howard Crandford. He is about twenty-five years of age, and has been a rather wild and reckless young man. He is the only relation, and in law stands natural heir to all the property, in the absence of a will. Phoebe Roylan, the murdered woman, wanted a will made, leaving three-fourths of the property to this young man, the other fourth to go to a woman in whom Susan, the living sister, has a deep interest."

"Susan would not agree to this at all. She wanted it the other way; that is, three-fourths to her friend, a Mrs. Pratson, and the remainder to young Crandford. They could not agree, and finally came to us about it. The estate is managed by us as trustees, you see, though we have no power over its disposition as such. We advised them to make the will leaving half to each. But both were stubborn, and would not come to that arrangement. Susan would not permit so much of it to go to the rascal, as she termed Crandford; Phoebe would not hear to such a proportion being given to a woman who had no legal claim upon them."

"Right there, as I say, the matter hung fire, and that was the situation at the time of this crime. You see, I am trying to give you a clear understanding of the case, all around."

"I comprehend," responded Dick.

"Well, circumstances have combined to point to this young man, Howard Crandford, as the

murderer. He has been arrested, and is locked up, charged with the crime. He and Susan had never been on good terms. She did not like him, and he regarded her with the same feeling. Phoebe had always been his friend, and had more than once supplied him with money, robbing herself to do it."

"And still he is suspected of the crime?" Dick mused.

"Yes. On the night of the murder he was in the house till a late hour, with the murdered woman, in the sitting-room. They were alone together, for Susan would not join them, owing to her dislike for the young man. He had come for money, and failing to get the sum required, had some hot and high words with his aged benefactress. When he went away it was in anger. These statements came out at the inquest, and the young man was promptly put under arrest. Now the question is: Did he kill Phoebe Roylan or did he not?"

"First, his own assertion is that he did not. He declares that he did not know anything about the crime until he was arrested. On the other hand, a night watchman has come forward and taken oath that he saw Howard Crandford stealing out of the house at a very late hour; more definitely, about two o'clock in the morning. This, also, the prisoner denies. Again, marks of blood have been found upon his right sleeve; fresh marks, which, upon examination, prove to be human blood. Still again, a bowie-knife that was known to have been upon the wall of his room at his lodging, is missing, and he claims that it has been stolen from him."

"A pretty dark look for him, circumstantially," remarked the listening detective.

"I know it, sir, I know it; but, in spite of appearances, I believe Howard Crandford to be as innocent of the deed as I am!"

CHAPTER II.

DICK AT THE JAIL.

DEADWOOD DICK was deeply interested, for this was just the sort of mystery he took delight in.

There was a pause after the old lawyer's last assertion, during which the door opened, and another old gentleman entered, whom, from his strong resemblance to the lawyer, Dick immediately recognized as the partner, Daniel Kincarth.

Instantly at his appearance the "strange" office boy who had the predilection for saying strange things was off his chair, and the gate in the railed inclosure was thrown open.

The man entered, with a glance at Deadwood Dick, and went straight to the vacant desk.

"Daniel?" spoke his brother.

"Well, Samuel?" was the response.

"Let me introduce Mr. Bristol."

At this name Daniel immediately came forward to where Dick sat.

An introduction followed, and Daniel Kincarth fell into the conversation at once. Samuel gave him an idea of what had already been said.

"Yes, sir; we think the young man is innocent," Daniel coincided. "We knew his father well, and he was a man of finest honor. If his blood is in the veins of his son, Howard Crandford did not do this deed."

"Have you any suspicion who did, then?" asked Deadwood Dick.

"We have not," was the answer.

"You want me to go to work, then, with the theory of Howard Crandford's innocence, and try to fasten the crime upon some one else."

"That is it, exactly. We know that the young man is in a very tight place. The evidence of that night-watchman alone would hang him. In spite of all, we believe him innocent, and we want to prove him so."

Deadwood Dick was thoughtful for some moments.

"Well," he finally decided, "I will investigate the matter from that standpoint. I hope I can bring the matter out to suit you; but, rest assured that I shall fasten the crime upon the right party, if I am able to do so, even though it be the young man."

"We are willing that you should do that. Our confidence in his innocence is strong enough to warrant our giving you that license."

"That is understood. Now let me get at some of the particulars of the case that have not been touched upon. In what order were the doors and windows of the house when the crime was first discovered?"

"It is impossible to tell," answered Samuel Kincarth. "The servant was so excited that she does not know whether she found doors open or shut, fastened or unfastened. When the

police began to investigate, many of the doors and windows were open."

"That is a bad state of things to begin with. But, it is what might be looked for. Did the police discover any direct clew?"

"They found a button from young Crandford's coat in the hall, near the foot of the stairs."

"Bad, certainly; but he may have lost it there in the evening."

"Yes, we know," agreed Daniel; "but, see the other evidence. It is perfectly damning!"

"It lacks only an eye-witness to make it perfect," declared Dick. "It may be hard work to explain it away, even if the young man is innocent, as you believe."

"But it *must* be explained away!" cried Samuel. "In justice to the father of this boy, whom we knew well, we have pledged ourselves to that task. His case is in our hands, and we rely upon you to supply us with the material for the defense. We believe you can do it."

"I certainly hope I can," Dick said. "I will make the effort. What more can you tell me?"

"There is little more to tell. You will have the whole field to yourself. The police have made out their case, and are done with the matter."

Dick went away armed with all the lawyers could tell him, and with perhaps all it was necessary to know, at that juncture. He proceeded straight to the jail where the prisoner was held. He wanted to see Howard Crandford, to judge of his character for himself, and form his own impression as to his innocence or guilt.

Arriving at the lockup, he made known that he was from the office of the Kincarths, and was admitted into the cell where the young man was confined.

At sight of Howard's face, his first impression was not at all favorable. There was a worn, dissipated look, and a scowl that did not augur well for his innocence.

When he looked up, however, his face cleared, and the shadow seemed to pass off. And, now, had Dick not had another view of him the previous moment, the impression might not have been against him.

"Who are you, sir?" the prisoner demanded. Dick did not respond until the jailer had locked the door and retired.

Then he sat down upon the stool with which the cell was furnished, facing the prisoner, who sat on the edge of the cot bed.

"I am a detective," was Dick's answer. "I am sent here by your lawyers to have an interview with you toward establishing your innocence. I hope you will be entirely honest with me."

"What is your name?" the prisoner inquired.

"That is not important, is it?"

"But I want to know. Do you belong here in San Francisco?"

"No; I am a stranger here, almost," Dick responded. "My name is Bristol."

"Not the Bristol who just handled the Wynthorpe case!"

"The same. Are you satisfied?"

Dick noted that the fellow's manner was more nervous than it had been, and imagined that he had grown slightly pale.

"I am satisfied," was the return, "but I don't believe you can do me any good. I am afraid the case against me is too strong to be set aside."

"Are you innocent of the crime?"

"I am! I swear it!"

"Then why can not your innocence be established?"

"I don't know that it can't be, but I am afraid that it won't be. I am in a bad situation, Mr. Bristol."

"So it looks. What are the strong points against you?"

"Have the Kincarths not told you?"

"I am now asking you. Remember, I am here to work in your interest."

"Well, the worst is the statement of that night watchman, who says he saw me stealing out of the house at a late hour."

"You deny that, then?"

"I do, most emphatically."

"Does he know you well enough to be sure of what he asserts?"

"That is the worst of it. He knows me well, and his word is better than mine. I have the name of being a wild scamp."

"Well, what next?"

"These marks of blood on my right sleeve."

"How came they there?"

"I am not permitted to tell you that."

"What! and your life at stake? Are you a fool?"

"I hope I am not. But, no use urging the point; I am silent."

"Well, what next?"

"I used to have a bowie-knife hanging on the wall in my room. That is suddenly missing. The weapon that killed my aunt must have been a similar one."

"Have you any suspicion as to where that knife is?"

"I have not. It puzzles me completely."

"Stolen?"

"Yes, of course. It could be missing in no other way. I have not laid a finger upon it in weeks."

"And yet, in the face of all this, you insist that you are innocent."

"In the face of it all I swear that I am innocent; but, I can do nothing. My hands are tied—"

"Ha! there is more back of it, then?"

"I have not said so."

"I infer so."

"Well, to you I admit it. I did not say this to my lawyers, for they would only bother me to tell more."

"And could you establish your innocence if you would?"

"No; for even were I to tell the whole truth, it might only serve to render my situation the more desperate, and it would only bring ruin to another—"

He stopped short.

"Do you know who did kill the woman?" asked Dick, abruptly.

"No," was the answer, "I do not know."

"Have you any suspicion?"

"I have none."

"When it comes to the pinch, I suppose you'll tell your story."

"I will tell no more than I have told you; perhaps not so much. What I have let out to you is in confidence. If you have the ability they say you have, you may be able to help me."

"Which I doubt. It could not possibly look worse for you, as I said to the Kincarths, unless an eye-witness to the crime should appear against you."

"I know it, but I can do nothing."

"What you can tell will have more weight now than it will later on."

"Perhaps; but I am silent. You cannot understand the situation, so do not press me."

"But men will call you a fool, to run the risk of the gallows if you have a possible chance of clearing yourself of the charge."

"I care nothing for that. I know what I am doing. And mind, keep to yourself what I have let out. Make such use of it as you think you can, toward finding the murderer."

The detective took his leave. He was puzzled. Was the man innocent? He hardly believed it, and yet he might be. Anyhow, it was his business to probe the mystery to its very heart, and to do it he was determined.

CHAPTER III.

AT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME.

DICK'S next move was to visit the actual scene of the crime—not a very pleasant duty, but one necessary to his work upon the case.

He must see the interior of the house, the room where the crime was done, and draw his deductions from such things as might come under his observation.

When he came to the place he found policemen in charge.

Not in formal occupation, really, but there to preserve order and give protection until after the funeral.

There was quite a knot of persons in front of the house, gazing at it with morbid curiosity, as people will wherever a great crime has been committed.

Dick ascended the steps to the door where the policemen stood.

"A friend of the family, sir?" one asked.

"No, not just that," answered Dick, "but here on business."

"Want to see Miss Roylan?"

"Exactly."

"Well, the chances is she won't see ye, but I'll tell her. What name?"

"My name is Dick Bristol," Dick informed; "better know as Deadwood Dick, Jr." And as he spoke, in a low tone, he displayed his badge.

Both the officers whistled softly; their manner toward him changed immediately.

"Come right in," one invited. "We didn't know ye. Going to take a hand in the case?"

"Yes," Dick responded, as he followed into the hall. "I have been asked to take a look at the scene of the crime and see what I think about it."

"All right, I'll show you the room. We have full swing here, you know. It is on the next

floor. Of course," in lower tone, "it is a dead sure thing against the prisoner."

"Not much doubt about that, it would now seem," Dick agreed.

The policeman led the way up stairs, and along the hall to the front.

There the hall ended in a point, like an arrowhead, and a door was on each side, at an angle.

Opening the one at the left, the policeman stepped in, Dick following after him and closing the door.

"This is the room," the officer announced.

Dick looked well about him, taking in everything.

Two windows were in front, and between them stood the bed, the space being unusually wide.

On the right was a doorway without any door, but closed with a hanging curtain of heavy material. This evidently opened into an adjoining room, the one which was entered from the hall by the door on the right.

"What room is this other one?" inquired Dick.

"This is the one occupied by Miss Susan Roylan," was the answer.

"And she heard nothing of the horrible work that was going on in here."

"That is the way it stands. At the inquest she said she called to her sister, and getting no answer, came in. Then she discovered the crime."

Bristol looked well around, examining windows and doors carefully, but could find nothing to suggest a clew or point.

"Any one in the other room?" he asked.

"No," was the answer, "no one."

He drew aside the curtain and passed through. This room was like the other in almost every particular.

Here, again, the detective keenly scrutinized everything, but without result.

"Not much to be gained here," he observed. "Where does that servant sleep? Where is her room?"

"She has a room right at the rear of the hall, on the floor below."

"And it can't be supposed for a moment that either of them did the deed," reflected Dick, as though to himself.

The policeman looked hard at him.

"You don't imagine that Howard Crandford didn't do it, do you?" he demanded.

"The young man vows he didn't," said Dick.

"That be hanged! We've got the bulge on him too hard. He can't get out of it."

Dick left the room and passed along the hall to the stairs, the policeman following.

"Where is Miss Roylan?" asked Dick.

"Was in her sittin'-room a bit ago; want to see her?"

"Yes, I want to talk with her, while I am here."

They descended the stairs, and at the bottom the officer knocked lightly on the newel with his club.

A door at the end of the hall immediately opened, and a woman of advanced age looked out inquiringly.

"Your pardon, Miss Roylan," spoke the officer, "but I knocked for your servant, to tell her a gentleman to see you."

This, then, was Susan Roylan.

Dick had taken a good look at her before she could respond.

He saw in her a sharp-featured old woman, thin and straight, with keen eyes that looked out of place in so old a person's head.

"You want to see me?" she interrogated.

"Yes, madam," Dick returned, and he advanced toward her.

"What is your business with me?"

"Some questions I would ask concerning this crime."

"Are you an officer, then?"

"I am."

She drew back into the room, holding the door open for him to pass in.

This he did, and found himself in a dimly lighted sitting-room, with two or three other women present.

The old woman did not ask him to a seat, but stood before him, waiting for him to speak.

"First," Dick ventured, "do you really believe, madam, that Howard Crandford killed your sister?"

The old face before him became hard and cruel in its lines, and the answer came promptly, hard and cold:

"To be sure I believe it!" she declared. "He is none too good to do such a deed, and all the proof is against him. Why do you ask that question?"

"Because the young man is so emphatic in his

denial, and we are beginning to look about to see whether it is possible that it can have been the work of some one else."

Dick's words and manner went to imply that he was of the police.

"You are welcome to look about all you will, sir," the woman spoke next, in the same tone, "but it is my opinion that all you will discover will only confirm the evidence the more. Everything points to the rascal."

"Does it not seem a little unreasonable that he would kill the woman who was his friend?" asked Dick.

"He was capable of doing even that, sir. I know Howard Crandford for what he is. I never did trust him, and never would."

"I have heard from the Kinearts concerning the dispute about making your will which you and your sister had," Dick went on. "It looks unreasonable that the young man would thus put away his chance of getting any of the fortune."

The woman's eyes snapped, as she looked at him keenly.

"You mean to say, then, that if he had killed either, the victim would have been I?"

"It seems to me so. You certainly have no intention of willing your fortune to him, as he must have known well enough."

"You are right; I haven't. But you don't know that boy's character as I do. There is nothing good in him. Why, he demanded a large sum of money of my sister the other night, and went off in high anger because he did not get it."

"Which does not prove that he came back and killed her," reminded Dick.

"No; but what if he came back to steal it, and my sister discovered him?"

"Has anything been stolen?"

"I do not know; but if my sister had any money in the house it has been taken, for none was found in her room where she always kept it."

"What bank was your sister's money kept in?"

She named the institution.

Dick made mental note of it with an object in view.

"Another question," he continued; "had your sister any enemy, so far as you know?"

"She had none, sir. Everybody liked her, and, if anything, she had more real friends than I have."

"And there is not one circumstance you can cite in favor of young Crandford? Not a thing that will speak in his favor?"

"Not a single thing. He is the guilty one; I feel no doubt about it."

"But, of course, if you did know of anything in his favor, you would mention it, and so give him the benefit of it?"

"Assuredly. He shall have justice, so far as I am able to render it."

"You were the first one to discover the crime."

"I was, and have not recovered from the shock yet. I thought it would kill me."

"Were there any indications that a struggle had taken place?"

"None. I believe she was killed in her sleep."

"Then it must have been done with afore-thought intent, and your suggestion about her discovery of Crandford stealing her money, does not hold."

"I had not thought of it that way," the woman spoke in a meditative tone. "I may have been wrong in the other surmise."

"And it seems you were. Was that knife driven through the bedclothes? or was it buried in your sister's breast direct?"

"It had been struck right through the bedclothes, sir. But, pray hasten, for I feel as if I must faint."

"Yes," spoke up one of the other women present, "it is not right to torture her so."

"I am done," Dick immediately announced. "I will withdraw."

And that he did, forthwith, rejoining the officer in the hall.

CHAPTER IV.

A SUSPICION IS AROUSED.

A NEW and horrible suspicion had seized him. Was it possible, could it be possible, that this woman had killed her sister?

He felt ashamed of the thought, but it had come, and something seemed to urge the suspicion upon him.

Had he any ground for the suspicion? Looking at it squarely, he saw that he had none. It was a thought without anything to support it, or at any rate with but a mere shadow or impression for its foundation.

"Well, what did you gain?" the policemen asked.

"Very little," Dick had to admit.

"Anything to lessen the suspicion against the prisoner?"

"No; his case seems hopeless. I fancy it will go hard with him."

"I thought you would. Is there anything more you want to get hold of here?"

"Where is that servant? I want to talk with her."

"She is down in the rooms below. I'll call her up if you say so—"

"No, don't; I'll go down there."

"All right, as you please."

Dick descended the stairs that led to the basement.

Arriving at the bottom, he tapped at the door nearest at hand, and it was opened by a woman past middle age.

Dick went right in, closing the door after him, the woman having stepped back at his advance.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "I am an officer, and merely want to ask you a question or two."

"I was in hopes that was all done with," the woman observed. "It has been awful tryin' upon us, you wouldn't believe."

"No doubt about that; and I will be as brief as I can. What do you think of the arrest that has been made? Do you believe Howard Crandford is guilty?"

"How can I believe any other way, sir? Doesn't it speak for itself? I wouldn't ha' believed it of him, but I can't help it when it is so plain. I don't see what the boy was thinkin' about."

"Suppose he hadn't been suspected and arrested, is there any one else whom you might have thought guilty?"

"Not a one, sir. It would be a puzzle indeed, then."

"Well, I want to see the dead woman, and did not like to ask her sister; I thought it would be too severe upon her. Will you oblige me?"

"Why, certainly. And Miss Susan wouldn't ha' done it, nohow, so it is just as well you didn't ask her, poor soul."

"Is that so? But, then, it is easy to understand how she must feel about it, for it is terrible."

"Yes; she cannot bear it. She fainted at the discovery, and has not seen the body since. Come, and I'll take you up to the room."

"All right. It was she who made the discovery, then?"

"Yes; and if you could have heard her screams! I found her fainted in the hall at the top of the stairs."

"It must have been a terrible shock, and little wonder that she has not got over it. It is a wonder she can sleep in the house, after it."

"And I don't believe she could, only for me. She sleeps with me in my room, and don't go up to her own room at all. And yet she bears up wonderful well, considerin'."

That suspicion in Dick's mind strengthened, in spite of him.

The old servant led him up to the main floor, and into the front room, the parlor.

This room was quite dark, and in the space between the windows could be discerned the dread object, a coffin, covered with its black drapings.

Having closed the door, the woman advanced to one of the windows and drew the heavy curtain a little aside, and lifting the end of the pall, directed Dick to step forward and look.

This the detective prince did.

He looked upon an aged but kindly face, and judged that, while Phoebe Roylan had much resembled her sister, hers had been the better nature.

Dick was soon satisfied, and drew back.

The woman dropped the pall in place, closed the curtain, and they withdrew.

"Is there anything further?" the woman asked, when they were in the hall and the door had been closed after them.

"There is one thing more, if it is not asking too much," Dick answered.

"Say what it is, sir, and if it is anything that I can do, why—"

"It is this: I want to see the bedclothes under which the woman lay when the blow was struck. Have they been preserved?"

"They are down in the back kitchen, sir. I will take you to look at them."

Here Dick hoped to gain a point, and it would certainly be for Howard Crandford, or against him.

Following the woman down, he was led to a room where all the rough work of the house was evidently done, and the blood-stained bed-clothes were shown to him!

"Which of these were on top?" Dick asked.

"This one," the woman indicated, touching a light quilt.

Dick drew it apart from the others, and took it near the light.

There was a cut in it, just an inch and three-quarters wide. On the under side were some blood-stains, but on the outside, none.

Having measured the cut, and noted other points, Dick threw the quilt back and announced that he was satisfied. There was nothing more he could trouble the woman about then.

Shortly afterward he left the house.

"Well," he mused, "here is one point in favor of the prisoner, and really it is more than I hoped to find. Now I have more faith in his declaration that he is innocent."

"The hand that struck the death-blow to that poor old woman was not stained with her blood. Upon this point I am positive. Not a drop of blood came through that outer quilt, and I believe that the blood upon the sleeve of young Crandford's coat is not correctly accounted for."

"But, if he did not do the deed, then who did? That is what is my business to find out and make known. Hang it! I hate to suspect that old sister, but, somehow, I can't shake it off. It gains hold upon me at every step. If she did do it, then it is easy to understand why she will not look upon the face of the dead, or sleep again in the room next to the one in which the crime was committed."

These thoughts be turned over and over in mind as he walked along.

His objective point now was the bank that had been mentioned by Susan Roylan, in answer to his question.

Coming to his destination, he entered, and advancing to the office which he noticed was marked "Private," touched an electric button on the door.

"Is the president in?" he inquired, when the door was opened by a colored man in buttons.

"No, sah; he am not," was the information he got.

"Who is in, then?"

"De president's private clerk am in, sah."

"He will do, I guess. I will see him."

"Step right in, sah. What name shall I say, sah?"

Dick was disgusted with so much red-tape on the part of the flunkies.

"Tell him a police detective on business," he snapped, "and be lively about it, too."

The gentleman of color hastened off, and Dick looked around the place, to find himself in a sort of reception office, and not in the "inner of inners," as it were. There was still a further privacy beyond.

While he was reflecting how next to impossible it would be for an outsider to get into that inner office, the door opened and the dark returned, followed by a gentleman of middle age.

"You want to see me?" he asked.

"I am an officer," Dick answered, "and want to make a private inquiry about a certain depositor."

"State your business, then, sir."

"Did the dead Phoebe Roylan have any account here? If so, has she recently drawn upon it to any considerable amount?"

"Ha! the Roylan affair, eh? Strange case that. Wait one moment, sir, and you shall have the information you desire. Washington," to the darky, "request Mr. Gilroy to step in here."

But, no need to dwell at length upon the red-tapism by which Dick finally got at what he wanted to learn. It was found that Phoebe Roylan had an account there, and that on the day preceding her death she had drawn upon it to the amount of twelve hundred dollars.

Dick left the bank in a puzzled frame of mind.

"Had it been for that money that the woman was murdered? Here was an object, a motive; but who was to be suspected if not the wayward young man?"

The possibilities of the case were just beginning to open before the mind-vision of the all alone detective. There might be a more intricate tangle than even he had dreamed of.

He had proceeded only a little distance from the bank, when a light touch fell upon his arm.

Looking around instantly, he stopped short, with an exclamation.

"Kodak Kate!" the words he uttered.

"And you, here!"

Such was her response, and as their hands met her eyes questioned for an explanation.

"I don't wonder you are surprised," laughed Dick; "I'm somewhat surprised myself. I expected to be whirling away to the north, by this time; but, here I am, still in old 'Frisco."

"But how is it?" the little camera shadower

inquired. "Certainly it was your intention to set out, when you bade me good-by."

"A note detained me. Just as I was about leaving the hotel a letter was put into my hands, and as a result I did not go. I have been requested to take hold of this strange Roylan affair."

"The Roylan case!"

"Exactly. Are you surprised?"

"I, too, am working on the same case, Dick."

"The merry deuce you are! And in whose interest are you working?"

"I am trying to find something that will work in the favor of the prisoner, Mr. Crandford."

"It seems, then, that we are in company for another round, Kate. I am on the same lay. But, let us walk on together, and compare notes. This promises to be a big piece of work, if I am any judge."

CHAPTER V.

THE INTEREST DOUBLED.

DICK was glad of the chance meeting with his late ally. Kate had proved her ability by her work upon the other case, and Dick was glad enough to have her for his "pard" again.

"How came you to get upon the case?" Dick asked.

"Through the notoriety the papers gave me regarding that other affair," was the answer.

"The same here, too. But, for whom are you working? Come, let us get an understanding, and then we'll forge ahead with our ideas."

"It is a rather strange affair, my part in it, Dick. I received a note this morning in a woman's hand, with a hundred dollars inclosed. The note requested me to go at work immediately upon the case, trying to establish the innocence of Howard Crandford."

"And is that all you know about it? To whom were you directed to report? It looks strange, to say the least."

"And it is as strange as it looks, too. But, it is all right, so far as I am concerned. I had nothing to do, so took right hold. I am to report to the young man's lawyers if I find anything favorable to his case."

"And there was no signature to that letter?"

"It was signed 'A Friend in Secret.'"

"Will you let me see it?"

"Of course."

Kate thrust her hand into an inner pocket of the jaunty jacket she wore, and brought forth the note, which Dick took and read eagerly.

The writing was good, and the language faultless. But there was something about the writing that suggested an attempt at disguise.

It had a backhand slant, and the same letters in different words and lines were differently formed. The message was in almost as few words as Kate had stated it.

"There is a woman in the case, as usual," Dick observed.

"Yes, as there always is," assented Kate. "Eve is always on hand, where Adam is found."

"And you have no idea where this letter came from, eh? No suspicion as to who this unknown may be? We ought to find out, if possible."

"Haven't the slightest idea."

"It is an ordinary letter, in all appearances."

"Nothing more. It has probably been dropped into a post-box, and the risk of its reaching me assumed."

"But the money, what kind was it?"

"It was a new hundred-dollar bill."

"On what bank?"

She named the one Dick had just visited.

"I have just come from there," Dick informed her.

"And so have I!"

"We must have been there very nearly at the same time. I did not notice you, when I came out."

"I may have been standing at the teller's window. I was asking about the bill. Thought I might learn to whom it had been paid out, as there was not a crease in it except where it had been folded to put it in the letter."

"And could they tell you anything?"

"Nothing; only that it had been paid out within two days."

"How could they be so sure about that?"

"The bills had been in their hands no longer than that."

"I see. But, let's go back there immediately. I have another point now to investigate."

They turned and retraced their steps, Dick explaining the errand that had taken him to the bank, and Kodak Kate telling him how she had thought she recognized him, seeing him a little distance ahead of her when she came out upon the street, and had hastened forward to make sure.

Re-entering the bank, Dick cast his eye about to find the man Gilroy, who had supplied the information he sought before, and seeing him at his post, called his attention.

"Pardon me," he said, "but will it be possible for me to learn what kind of money was paid out to Phoebe Roylan the other day?"

The man turned away to speak to the teller, who had probably handled the money, and after a little talk with him, returned and announced:

"The payment was made in twelve new one hundred-dollar bills, sir."

Dick thanked him, and he and Kate went out and away.

"The case is evolving," Dick observed. "It is possible, but this is only a supposition, you know—possible that this bill is one of the twelve the murdered woman drew from the bank on the day before her death!"

"It may be, but it don't seem probable. Do you know, Dick, it seems to me that we have taken hold of a case this time that is going to baffle us."

"It sha'n't if I can help it, be sure of that. But, what were you going to do next? What plan had you in mind when you caught sight of me?"

"Why, I thought I would go to the jail and see the prisoner, and from there go to the office of the Kincarths, to see if they could enlighten me any in regard to the note."

"I approve of your going to the jail, but not of your visit to the office of the lawyers. It will do no harm to keep this point out of their grasp for the time being."

"And what ought I to say to Mr. Crandford?"

"We want to learn what woman has an interest in him."

"Yes; and it must be got around in a nice way, or he may baffle us on the important point."

"Would you be willing to let me take the note and money, and visit him in your stead?"

"Why, certainly; and be glad to let you do it."

"That is what I will do, then. Let's go together, and you can stand just outside the cell and listen to what is said."

Their steps were bent in the direction of the jail, at once, and in a little time they were there.

When they reached the jail they met a veiled woman just coming out. She was in deepest mourning, and it was impossible to see anything of her face.

"What woman was that?" Dick immediately asked of the jailer, or at any rate the man who had admitted him before.

"I give it up," was the answer. "She's been in to see your man Crandford. I didn't get a look at her face."

Dick had turned to his brave little ally.

"Your mysterious correspondent, for a hasty guess," he quickly whispered.

"As likely as not you are right. Shall I follow her, and see what comes of it?"

"Certainly! and don't let her throw you off. I'll be at your home this evening at eight."

Kate was off; the veiled woman was under surveillance.

Dick expressed his desire to see the prisoner again, and was admitted to the cell.

He found the young man with the same scowl upon his face that he had noticed upon his first visit, but it vanished when he looked up.

"Back again?" he queried.

"As you see," answered Dick.

"Well, what have you accomplished?"

"More than you may suppose," Dick hinted.

The prisoner looked at him questioningly, even eagerly.

"Well, tell me what it is," he requested. "I can stand it."

"First tell me how the police accounted for that blood upon your sleeve. I want to know what they thought about that."

"Why, they set forth the idea that I had got it from the knife, after the deed was done. They argued that it hadn't come there in any other way."

"I supposed they must take some such view of it. I have found that it was impossible for the blood to have spurted upon you, for it did not any more than stain the outer quilt."

"That was the way they explained it."

"And you still assert that it was not the blood of the murdered woman at all, do you?"

"I still swear that it was not. I am as innocent of the crime as you are. I do not know anything whatever about it. Let this be final upon that point."

"All right, I will mention it no more. And now I'll tell you something. On the day before

yesterday Phoebe Roylan drew twelve hundred dollars out of the bank."

Did the prisoner give a start? or did Dick only imagine it?

"Well, proceed," the young man urged, as Dick paused. "What follows that?"

"You seemed to start when I mentioned it."

"Did I? Well, maybe I did."

"Why should you?"

"I was thinking how she fibbed to me that night. I wanted a loan, as is well known, but she said she hadn't the amount."

"I see; and the fact that you wanted money, and the fact that she had that day taken money out of the bank, and no doubt had it in the house, tells against you. I suppose you can see that."

"Yes; but go on!"

"Well, that money was taken by some one; I will not venture to guess by whom. But, I know where it went to!"

The prisoner's eyes fairly burned, but he held control over his features.

"Then you have made a step forward in the case," he remarked. "But where did it go to? I am anxious to hear more about it."

"It passed into the hands of a woman," Dick asserted, eying the man keenly. "Into the hands of a woman in whom you have an interest, a more than common interest. I have one of the bills in my possession now. Here it is."

CHAPTER VI.

POSITIVE EVIDENCE.

THIS time the fellow gave a start that was not to be doubted.

"You are a very fiend at detective work!" he cried. "How did you get hold of this?"

This exclamation scored for Dick a big point, and one that he stored away to draw upon at the proper time. It looked darker for Howard Crandford.

Dick had aimed well, and the blow had struck home. He was coming at something, though of course he could not foresee what it would prove to be. He was more than half inclined to think the police had made no mistake.

He smiled at the prisoner, baffling him.

"Fortune seems to have favored me," he returned. "I have struck oil much sooner than I expected I should."

"But, what have you learned?" was demanded. "If you are working in my interest, as you say, let me know what points you have gained."

"The points may not be at all favorable to you, in which case you might not relish the disclosures."

The reader will see that Dick was trying a "bluff" game. He of course did not really know that this bill he had in hand was one of the twelve that had been in the possession of the murdered woman; but that was something the prisoner could not know. He could only see the matter in the light in which Dick presented it, and in no other, and from that Dick was trying to gain further ground.

"I don't care whether they are or not," was the response.

"You seem inclined to take your situation in good spirit. One would not imagine that the rope is as good as around your neck."

"Why not that way as well as any other? I am in for it, and all the proof is against me. What am I going to do about it? I couldn't clear myself if I would, so I may as well take it easy."

"Do you really think you will hang for this crime?"

"I haven't much hope of escape from that fate. You don't give me any hope, that is certain."

"Because I can't. But, you have a friend who is working for you, trying to do what she can. I mean the woman from whom this bill was obtained."

"If I have any friends," was the evasive response, "they may do me more harm than good. You claim to be my friend, and yet you as much as tell me that I killed my aunt to get this money."

"I only tell you how it looks. And now, for your own sake, I want you to take me into your confidence and make a clean breast of the whole thing. You are innocent, you say; tell me where you were, and what doing, about the time this awful murder was done."

"Can't do it; no use your urging me. Go ahead with your work. If you add to the evidence against me, I can't help it. If you can clear me, then you are a better man than I think you are, and I'll think you beat the ghost of Vidocq at your calling."

"Then you absolutely refuse to give me any

enlightenment, further than you have already done?"

"I do. I will not utter another word regarding the case."

"Then I must take other steps. I will have to force this woman to speak. She just left your cell."

At this the prisoner half-sprung up.

"Has that woman been detained?" he gasped.

"She will not be lost sight of," assured Dick.

"Then all is lost! Fool that she was to come here."

Dick congratulated himself upon the fact that Kodak Kate was into the case with him.

Upon this woman, whoever she might prove to be, he believed, hinged the whole scheme. And Kodak Kate would be likely to learn something about her before she gave up the task that had been given her.

The prisoner had sunk down upon the stool, and let his head fall upon his hands.

"You may as well tell me everything," Dick observed. "It will be only a question of time when I shall get at the truth, anyhow."

"See here, Deadwood Dick," and the fellow looked up, "I'll tell you this: I know nothing about the murder of Phoebe Roylan. Believe that or not, just as you see fit. But, if you go on upon the trail you have set out upon, you are going to hang me. If you have any regard for a poor devil in my fix, if you can take my word that I am innocent, draw out and do not let the police know anything about this woman."

"An innocent man would have no such fears as that," declared Dick.

"Then you believe me guilty. Very well, go on, and some day you may find out that I have not lied to you."

"Is it possible, then, that *this woman* is the guilty one?" questioned Dick.

He was pushing the case while the fire was up.

"By heavens, no!" was the cry. "She is as innocent as an angel!"

"You may have to speak, to save her from taking your place here, my friend."

"No fear of that," with a sad smile. "She is safe; but, if you go on, I tell you you will hang me, as sure as I live this minute. Drop the case, and spare me. There may be a ghost of a chance for me, if you will."

"I will not drop it. That is not Richard M. Bristol's style. I rather think it is the woman you are concerned for, more than for yourself. We shall see, no doubt."

"You won't take my word. Very well; I can say no more. The woman is safe, I tell you that candidly. I am the one in danger. Go on, if you are determined, but it may sometime come to you that you have been the means of hanging an innocent man."

"Your situation can't be made any worse than it is, I fancy," reminded Dick. "If you are innocent, as you maintain, something may come to light that will save you. Anyhow, I am not going to give the case up."

"Then I have no more to say."

"You won't tell me who *this woman* is?"

"I will not."

"Nor what her interest is in you?"

"No."

"Nor how she came by this money?"

"How do I know that the money has been in her possession at all? I believe you are trying to bluff me on the weakest kind of a hand, Deadwood Dick."

"You are welcome to entertain that idea. But I see there is no use talking to you. You are as determined as a bulldog, and had rather hang than try to save yourself, it appears."

"I have told you that it is no use for me to try. The circumstantial evidence has closed around me with such power that the chain cannot be broken."

"Nonsense! You have only to tell where you were at the time the crime must have been done."

"And that I will not do, though I swing as high as Haman!"

"That settles it. No use wasting any more time with you. I'll get at the facts, though, without your help."

Dick took his leave to make other moves, at once. The scent was now warm; he hoped soon to make it hot.

He had learned the address of the night watchman who had given such damaging testimony against the young man, and wanted to see him, to form an opinion of his character by personal contact, so he made his way direct to his place of residence.

He found the man at home, and up and awake, having not yet retired for his daytime sleep.

He was a man of forty or so, a plain but

worthy looking fellow, with every appearance of sobriety and honesty.

"I have called to ask a question or two regarding that Roylan affair," Dick explained.

"And it is a mess that I wish I'd never known anything about," the man declared forcibly.

"Why do you say that, my man?" Dick asked.

"Because, hang me if I don't feel sorry for young Crandford."

"But he is not deserving of pity, for there can't be any doubt about his being the murderer."

"That is the way it looks, I know. Of course he must be guilty."

"You know him well, then?"

"Yes, perfectly well."

"And there's no chance for a mistake about the man you saw coming out of the house?"

"Not a ghost of a chance. I wish there was, for I've nothin' against Howard Crandford, and would like to see him get clear."

"How came you to testify against him?"

"I was called. It was knowned that I was watchman at the store across the way, and the crowner sent for me."

"Then you didn't go of your own will, eh?"

"No; and I don't believe I would, either. But when I was in for it, why of course I had to tell the truth."

"And what did you tell? Kindly give me the fact of what you know and of what you told at the inquest."

"It is soon done. I had stepped out on the street, in front of the store, right opposite the house where the crime was committed. It was about ten o'clock. It was three or four minutes after two when I went into the store a little while afterward. While I was there, I looked across the way and saw a man coming out at the front door, very cautiously. Thinking it might be a robber, I started across the street, but when I was nearer, and the fellow was coming down the steps, I saw who it was and turned back."

"And there was no chance whatever for you to be mistaken?"

"No, most positively. My eyes do not fool me."

"Upon your evidence, sir, the poor devil will probably be hanged."

"I can't help it; I have spoken the truth, and that only. I can't lie about it, and I wouldn't, either."

"But the young man himself declares that he was not in the house, and did not come out at that time. Asserts positively that you must be mistaken."

"You have heard my statement, sir. Inquire about me, and you will find that I am a man of truth. What I have said must stand, because it is the truth, and I will not change it to a lie. I positively saw Howard Crandford coming out of that house at two o'clock in the morning, the night of the crime."

There was nothing more to be said, so Dick thanked the man and took his leave, puzzling his mind with the different points.

It did not seem a point of doubt, now, that the accused man had been in the house at an unusual hour, on the night of the crime. The witness evidently was candid in what he said. That being the case, Crandford must be the murderer.

CHAPTER VII.

KODAK KATE'S BRILLIANT PLAY.

MEANWHILE what of Kodak Kate?

Giving the veiled woman a little start, she had gone after her with the determination not to lose sight of her.

The unknown stepped out at a gait which proved that she was not by any means an old person, and the shadower found that it was going to tax her own speed to keep up with the shadowed.

The trail was a plain one, so to speak, and one easy to follow, and the direction lay toward a semi-aristocratic quarter of the city.

Block after block was passed, the veiled woman keeping up the same pace, until one of the business thoroughfares was reached. Here she slackened her pace a little, but made no stop until suddenly she turned and entered a millinery store.

Determined not to lose sight of her, Kodak Kate entered the same store as soon as she came to its doors, and in the rear of the long shop she saw her suspect, with the heavy veil thrown a little aside, speaking to a woman whom Kate knew to be at the head of the establishment.

Without appearing to be paying any notice to her, Kate approached a ribbon counter and began examining samples, finally making a small purchase.

While she was busy there, she noticed that the veiled woman passed behind the rear end of the counters, into a sort of workshop, and from that into another apartment that was curtained off, and which Kate knew to be a dressing-room.

Having made her simple purchase, Kate talked "hats" with the saleswoman while she waited for the reappearance of the woman in black.

Finally the curtains parted, and a woman came out, a handsome, dashing woman, richly dressed.

At first Kate did not believe it could be the person she had seen to enter.

When the woman stopped again, to speak to the head of the establishment, however, she leaned over the glass case precisely as the veiled woman had done.

This made the camera expert alert in an instant, and when the woman took her leave and started toward the doors, Kate took a good look at her dress and recognized it.

Trust a woman to pay attention to dress, every time! That it was the woman who had entered the store in disguise, the able little detective was now positive.

When the woman was near enough, walking with stiff, aristocratic step, her eyes upon the door and noticing no one, was Kate's opportunity.

She had her camera with her—was seldom without it—carrying it by its strap over her shoulder, yet hidden under her jacket at her left side. She touched it with her hand, there was scarcely an audible click, and she had "bagged" a picture!

And this, too, without pausing in her idle talk with the saleswoman upon the ponderous subject—"Hats."

When the woman had passed out, the little detective ended her conversation and followed after her.

Now the pace was leisurely and dignified, like that of a lady out merely for a little shopping exercise.

Kate followed, and at last had shadowed the woman to her destination.

She entered a house in the aristocratic limits, and Kate, who had seen her ring the bell, and enter immediately when the door was opened, concluded that it was her home.

A person calling, she reasoned, would have to pause to exchange a word with the servant, unless in an exceptional case. In this case there had been no such pause; the woman had stepped right in the moment the door swung open.

The alert little "Snap Shot" noted street and number, and then came the inquiry, what the next move should be.

Her work would scarcely meet the approval of Deadwood Dick, she believed, unless she learned who this woman was.

But, how was she to accomplish that? It was at first a difficult problem, but an idea was soon coined.

Advancing to the house, she mounted the steps and rung the bell.

The door was soon opened by a trim-looking girl in white apron and smart cap.

"Will you kindly tell me who lives here?" Kate asked.

"Mr. Crandall Ingerslee," was the answer.

"Then I have guessed the right number, it seems," Kate observed. "Is Mrs. Ingerslee at home?"

"She is," was the response.

"Will you tell her that a young woman desires to see her?"

"What name is it, if you please?"

"Tell the lady that I thought it best not to mention my name. She will very likely understand."

"Very well. Be seated here, please, and I will carry your message to her at once." And indicating a reception chair in the hall, the girl went up stairs.

In a few moments she was back.

"I will show you into this room," she said. "Mrs. Ingerslee has been out, and will come down as soon as she changes her gown."

From this bit of detail Kate learned one thing—that the woman she had shadowed was Mrs. Ingerslee.

Kate stepped into the room and waited, and after a little time the door opened and the woman came in.

It was, in truth, the same one Kate had shadowed, and her name was now positively ascertained.

This was one point, even if she gained no others.

At first Kate did not speak, wanting to see if the woman would know her by her recent portrait in all the papers.

She noticed that the lady did give a slight start at her first glance, but recovered immediately, and as Kate hesitated about speaking, said:

"You wanted to see me?"

"If you are Mrs. Ingerslee," was the response.

"I am she. I do not remember ever to have seen you. I presume we have never met before."

"We never have, to my knowledge, madam," Kate made answer. "I received your note this morning, with the hundred dollars inclosed, and—"

The woman had paled, her eyes were starting, and she interrupted:

"My note! Hundred dollars! Are you crazy?"

"Not at all, madam," was the quiet assurance.

"You must be. Who are you?"

"I am Kodak Kate, whom you sent for, or rather—"

"Kodak Kate! Sent for! Surely you have made a mistake. I never heard of you; have no knowledge of you."

But the woman's face had not recovered its color, and her hand trembled slightly with the excitement she could not repress.

The little detective smiled.

"If you insist that I have made a mistake, I suppose I have," she remarked. "I have come with something important to say, however, madam."

"I was never so mystified in my life," the woman declared, in a manner that was well-calculated to make Kate doubt her being upon the right track. "But you have roused my curiosity to the highest pitch. Who and what are you? if you will permit me to ask that."

"All I can say, since it seems certain that I have made a great blunder, is, that I am a detective. But, it seems almost impossible, too, that I can have made a mistake in this instance. I received a note from a lady this morning, inclosing a hundred-dollar bill, with instructions to go at work immediately upon a certain case which I will not mention yet. Now, having discovered something of great importance—so great, in fact, that I dare not follow the directions of the letter further, for fear of getting my patron into serious trouble, I set out to find her to report. My effort in this direction has led me straight here."

The woman's lips were compressed, her whole manner was that of the greatest possible strain of excitement.

"You fairly thrill me!" she ejaculated. "You have roused my woman's curiosity to the highest pitch. Still, I must insist that you have made a wonderful mistake, and one that I cannot possibly account for. I will not ask you to disclose anything, but I am burning with interest, as I will not deny."

"Well, if you are really not the woman who sent me the money," Kate remarked, "you certainly cannot know anything about her, and so I will make one statement, since it can do no harm."

"No, I do not ask you to disclose anything. Still, if you are free to do so, since you have thus far awakened my interest—more than interest, why—"

"You are entitled to a little enlightenment, and I will give it, that you may know the importance of my coming here—that is, of my desire to find the person who employed me. That hundred-dollar bill was *stolen* money, and was probably stained with the blood of a horrible murderer!"

"Oh, heavens! You do not mean it!"

The woman had sprung to her feet, her face a picture of horror.

Kodak Kate was looking at her keenly, and a gleam of satisfaction shone in her sharp eyes.

"You do not know what a shock you have given me," the woman immediately added. "I am so nervous; the least thing upsets me, and such a horrible statement as you—I almost fainted, I believe."

"Enough to shock any one," Kate assumed.

"But, how in the world did you ever make such a mistake as to come to me?" the woman asked.

"That, since I have made so serious a mistake," was Kate's answer, "I dare not reveal to you. I will take my leave, and I am sorry that I have troubled you. But I would ask a favor of you, madam."

"And what is that?" was the quick demand.

"That you will reveal to no one what I have said to you. It might be the means of getting an innocent person into serious trouble."

"Rest assured that I shall respect your wishes. But, what do you intend doing, since you cannot

find your patron, as you call the person who engaged you in the matter?"

"Really, I hardly know what to do. The affair has taken so dangerous a turn that, in justice to my unknown employer, I believe I ought to drop it right where it is and investigate no further."

"I believe I would do that. There is no knowing what awful consequences might result if you went further. But, it is not for me to say."

"That is what I shall do," Kate spoke decisively. "I have no desire to figure in the matter any further, working in the dark. I shall drop the case at once, I think, and keep secret what I have learned. It can do little good to make it known, and it might do much harm. I had better look into it no further."

CHAPTER VIII.

DOMESTIC DISCORD.

THE little camera queen had done nobly, and she felt like congratulating herself upon her fine playing and the success it had brought.

In her mind there was no doubt that this woman was the person who had sent her the note and money, and engaged her services in the case.

Her deep excitement, her nervous anxiety, and now, last of all, the relief she seemed to experience when the camera detective told her she intended to drop the matter and investigate no further.

The success was greater than the little "Snap Shot" had dared dream about.

She anticipated with exultation her reporting to Deadwood Dick.

"While I know nothing about the matter," remarked the woman, "it seems to me you are taking the right course in the affair. If what I suspect is true, there is no telling what trouble might come of it, even to yourself. You cannot imagine to what a pitch you have roused my interest."

"I suppose I have, and no wonder," was Kate's response to that. "But, I dare not enlighten you any further than I have, for that would be to break the very resolve I have just formed. So pray do not ask me any questions. I am very sorry that my mistake has caused you all this trouble, or if not trouble, then excitement, at least; but I felt sure that I was upon the right track."

"Well, I cannot ask anything, of course; but you see how very easy it is for one to be mistaken. Have you no means of finding out who your mysterious patron is?"

"No means whatever, now, since this has gone wrong. I could report to certain lawyers, but I will not do that, now."

"No, I agree with you that that ought not to be done, out of justice to your unknown friend. For surely the person must be your friend. It might cause her untold trouble."

"That is the situation, and you can understand how I am placed."

"And the woman gave you no address? Nor gave directions how to reach her, in case you found it necessary?"

"Neither, madam."

"Well, well, it is mysterious. It is like a chapter in thrilling fiction. It is just possible that she may communicate with you again, though."

"Yes, it is possible, but I do not look for anything further from her. I am of the opinion that her first message was her last—that it told everything in few words, and ended everything."

Kate had risen to take her leave.

At that moment the front door opened, and steps were heard in the hall.

Mrs. Ingerslee immediately showed great perturbation, and her finger went to her lips, a signal of caution.

The other door opened immediately afterward, the door of this room they were in, and a tall, dark man entered. He was evidently at home there.

"Pray tell Madam Christie," the woman was saying to Kate as the man stepped in, "that I have not yet made up my mind regarding the garment. I may drop in to see her to-morrow. That is all. I will show you out."

She had laid a hand upon Kate's arm, now, and pushed her gently but forcibly toward the door.

The little detective quickly understood, and accepted the cue.

"I will carry the message, madam," she meekly assured, and allowed herself to be forced from the room without further remark.

The woman did not follow her into the hall, but closed the door behind her at once and turned

to the man, stepping toward him with hands outstretched in welcome, and a smile upon her face.

Kodak Kate had no excuse for tarrying, so opened the front door and passed out and hastened away.

She had gained much, but was only the more disappointed that she had not been able to gain still further clews and evidence. Who was the man who had entered? Why had she been turned away so very suddenly at his coming?

"Deadwood Dick was right," she mused. "This is going to be a big case, before it is done with. And how strange that I should be associated with him again! Brave, noble, chivalrous Dick Bristol! I could almost say—But, what am I thinking about?"

Whatever her thoughts were, they caused a flush to mount to her cheeks, and she glanced about her, as though to see whether any one observed.

But, let us return to the house she had just left, and witness what passed between the woman and man she had left in the room.

The man took the proffered hands, but with never a smile upon his dark face.

And his face was a dark one. It seemed to wear a habitual scowl. He was good-looking, but his countenance was marred by its expression of—what? Suspicion seemed to be his ruling expression.

On his nose, at this time, was a strip of plaster, and a dark circle under one eye looked as though he had been having a bout at fisticuffs. He was elegantly dressed, in perfect taste, and looked like a Spanish gentleman of blue blood. He probably was of Spanish descent.

"Who was that woman?" he asked, coldly.

"Only one of Madam Christie's persons," was the smiling answer.

"How am I to know that?" was the suspicious demand.

"Now, really, Crandal," was the smiling response, "I am half-determined to laugh at you. Can't you take my word for it? Or, if that won't do, didn't you hear what we were talking about as you came in?"

"Well, forgive me, pet, but it is my passionate love for you that makes me so jealous of even a woman. I will share your affection with no one. Do you understand that? With no one!"

This last came out fierce and strong.

"And no one asks you to share it," was the smiling rejoinder. "My love is all yours, so do not let that trouble you any. But what brings you home at this unexpected hour?"

"Have you forgotten what date this is?"

"I believe it is the twelfth."

"Right. And what about the twelfth?"

"Upon my word, I do not know what you are coming at, Crandal."

"What! Have you forgotten that thousand dollars that is due to-day? Is it possible that you are going to tell me you haven't it? By heavens! but I'll investigate that story of yours—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" in a merry ripple of laughter, "but you do get so excited, you dear old dear, you! Why, I have had that money laid by for a good many days, and never once thought to give it to you. I will go and get it immediately."

She disengaged her hands, tripped lightly away to the door, opened it, and continued on up the stairs.

The man looked after her with his dark face scowling, and his eyes burning with a light that was unmistakably jealousy.

And the woman, the moment she was out of the room, allowed her own countenance to alter suddenly. The smile vanished, and in its place came a hungry, wistful, hunted look that it was pitiable to see. It looked as though she had a heavily-burdened heart.

She was not gone more than a minute, and when she returned, she had in her hand a number of crisp, new bank-notes. The smile was upon her lips again, as she entered, and extending the money, she said:

"Here it is, Crandal, every dollar of it. And I assure you that it is returned with grateful thanks to you for the kindness."

"Humph!" the man muttered, taking the bills and glancing at them.

There were ten of them, each of a hundred dollars—one thousand dollars the sum total.

Having counted them, the man thrust them into his vest pocket, and that done, turned upon his wife—such was their relation—and demanded:

"Now, I want to know where this money has been."

"Candal!"

The exclamation was in an injured tone, and accompanied with a look of keen reproach.

"Oh! I know," he waived, "but it is my right to know, and I'm going to find out, too. Who has had this money?"

A look of settled firmness came into the woman's eyes, and she answered:

"I will not tell you!"

"But you shall!"

"I will not! When the money was borrowed, it was upon the condition that you were not to ask whom it was for. I was to be responsible to you for it, and upon that understanding you let me have it. Beyond the fact that it has been in the hands of a lady, as you knew before, I shall tell you nothing."

"Furies! dare you talk this way to me?"

"Craudal, it is not a question of daring or not daring; it is a point of honor between myself and a dear friend, and in accord with the understanding we had when the money was asked for."

"But, who is this friend? That is all I ask to know. I can respect the secret as well as you."

"And you would have your wife break her word of honor, spoken in pledge? To say nothing of breaking your own part of the simple agreement?"

"Then you refuse to make the disclosure?"

"I have been forced to refuse."

"There must be a deep reason for it. But, I will learn what it is, and then let me warn you—"

"How unreasonable you are! When this lady came to me to ask the favor, the loan of a thousand dollars, her face was flushed with shame at the humility, and my pity was in full sympathy for her. She would not have her name disclosed to you, and would not accept the money except on that condition. I put the matter before you, and you at once agreed. Now you would break your word of honor! For shame!"

The man cooled under that reproach, at last, and gave way.

"Well, well, it is asking too much, I suppose," he remarked. "But you have made me so suspicious by your actions, that—"

"It is all your terrible jealousy, you dear old goosey," the woman interrupted, flinging her arms around him. "The money is again in your pocket, and there is no reason in the world why you should doubt me."

"I know, love, but these mysterious transactions do not tend to increase my confidence any. And to say nothing of mysterious burglars in the house— Confound it! but that experience of the other night is enough to make a man of my hot temper go out of his head. Pity I didn't kill the wretch!"

CHAPTER IX.

DICK'S HONOR TESTED.

In the mean time Deadwood Dick had made another move.

It was one he had had in mind from the first, but which had seemed of minor importance, at the preliminary moves of the investigation.

Whether it would amount to anything or not, he of course could not tell till it had been put to the test. But, be that as it might, it was a point in which he had interest.

The prince of all-around detectives still had in mind what the old lawyer had told him, concerning the Roylan sisters, and their inability to agree upon the manner in which they should dispose of their property by will. Susan was for leaving the bulk of it to a Mrs. Pratson.

And this was a woman, who, according to what Dick had gathered, had no claim upon the sisters whatever. At any rate, that had been the way in which Phoebe had looked at it.

Dick had the address of the woman, Mrs. Pratson, and upon leaving the jail on the last-mentioned occasion, he started out to find her.

When he reached the destination he found it was an humble home, in a part of the city inhabited by the poorer classes.

The door was opened in response to his ring, and a pleasant-faced woman of twenty-five was before him.

"Are you Mrs. Pratson, madam?" Dick inquired.

"That is my name, sir," she answered.

"Is your husband at home?"

"No, sir."

"He is at work, I suppose."

"Yes; did you want to see him?"

"Yes. But perhaps you can answer some questions just as well. By the way, what is his business?"

"He is a carpenter, sir. Will you step in? If

it is really necessary I can go and fetch him, for he is not far away."

"Yes, I will come in for a moment, if I may," Dick accepted, stepping in and following into a plain but neat parlor. "You need not send for him, however; it is not worth while."

Two little children had followed the woman into the hall, and now into the room, and when she had placed a chair for the caller and taken a seat herself she took the younger of the children in her arms, and awaited to hear what the caller's business might be.

"You have heard of the murder of Phoebe Roylan, of course," Dick opened.

The woman started, and a sudden paleness came upon her face. The mention of the crime evidently gave her a shock.

"Yes, I have heard of it," she acknowledged.

"Is your husband in any way related to the Roylan family?"

"Not that I know of, sir. I am sure he is not, in fact."

"Then it must be yourself."

"I do not know it, I am sure. I don't think it can be so."

"Do you know Susan Roylan the living sister?"

"Yes, I know her, sir."

"Are you well acquainted with her?"

"I think I can say I am. She has been here a good many times."

"And you have visited her."

"No; I have never been there. She never invited me."

"Do you know what the nature of her interest in you is? I believe she thinks well of you."

"I am sure I do not know. She has been very good to us, at times when my husband has been out of work. That is all I can say."

"Well, did you ever see the murdered sister?"

"No, sir."

"Or Howard Crandford, who is under arrest for the crime?"

"No, sir; never saw either of them."

"And all you know about them, then, is simply that which you have stated concerning Susan?"

"That is all, sir."

"But, how came she to have an interest in you, in the first place?"

"I do not know. It was once when Charles, my husband, was out of work. She called, said she had heard of our bad luck, and wanted to help us a little. We were in no position to refuse, and she assisted us liberally all that winter."

"And from that time on, eh?"

"Yes; and perhaps before."

"How was that?"

"Charles has often had work put into his hands that has come to him without his seeking, and he could never tell how it had come to him."

"Then you have every reason to think well of Susan Roylan?"

"Yes; you may be sure of that."

Dick had evidently reached the end of his rope, here, and it was useless to remain any longer.

With some plausible excuse for his call, and the questions he had asked, he went away, as much puzzled as when he had come.

What was this woman to Susan Roylan? he asked himself. The fact that she had made her an object of a charitable impulse, was not important; but that she desired to leave a fortune to her, was.

He could not answer the question.

For the present, then, he was done, and would return to the office of the Kincarths.

In due time he came out upon Kearney street, and was not long in reaching the destination in view upon the busy thoroughfare.

Mounting the stairs, he was soon at the door of the office, and opening it, entered the railed inclosure within. There was Oliver Upp, the strange boy with the strange partiality for saying strange things, ready to greet him.

At a glance Dick saw that both the Kincarths were at their desks.

The boy acted as though he had never seen Dick before.

Neither of the Kincarths looked up, except Samuel's glancing with one eye.

"What shall I say for you?" asked the office boy, as solemnly as an owl, in his set form of question.

"Is Mr. Kincarth in?" Dick asked, purposely to see what answer the lad would make this time. The question was needless.

"Yes, sir; both of him," was the response. "Which one of him will you see, sir? What shall I say for you, sir? Mr. Samuel, sir? or Mr. Daniel?"

"By this time it was clear that Dick was

going to get no recognition until it came about in the usual form, according to the rules of the office, of which he had already heard enough.

"Well, I want to see both of him," he informed the boy. "Just tell him it is Mr. Bristol."

The boy was off like a shot.

Stopping upon a square in the carpet between the two desks, he spoke.

"Sirs, Gentlemen. Mr. Bristol. To see both of you, sirs." And he stopped short at that.

Both the old gentlemen glanced up, took a survey at Dick, and in one voice both gave the usual direction.

"Admit him," they said, "and place a chair."

Dick detested all this nonsensical flummery, but it was according to office rules and regulations.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Bristol," spoke Samuel, when Dick had entered and taken a seat. And he spoke in the low, guarded tone, another rule of the office, as we have already seen.

"But I notice your degree of gladness doesn't do away with your stiff and formal way of admitting me," Dick suggested. "It is like working one's way into a lodge-room, to get inside that railing."

The gentlemen smiled.

"The rules of the office," explained Daniel. "It will be the same at your hundredth call, if you come so many times. No chance for office boys to suspect and magnify, and possibly tattle; and less chance for young ears to overhear and carry tales out of school. See?"

Dick admitted that he saw.

"Well, and what is it?" asked Samuel.

"I have a clew, and thought I would drop in and report, as I am at leisure for the time being."

"At leisure! Then have you solved the riddle? But, no, since you speak of only a clew. What is it you mean?"

"Some cases don't admit of being pushed," responded Dick. "This is one of them. I have come to tell you that the outlook for Crandford is dubious."

"Ha! you think it is, eh?"

"I must admit that I do. It looks dark."

"What have you done? What have you discovered?"

"I have visited the scene of the crime, and have interviewed several persons. There is no doubt in my mind that Crandford came out of that house at two o'clock on the morning of the murder."

"Then you think that night watchman's evidence will stand?"

"I do, in spite of everything."

"That is bad. We hoped we would be able to break that."

"I don't know how you are going to do it, gentlemen."

"Why, we'll tell you," whispered Daniel; "we'll have an *alibi* set up, and one that can't be broken down."

"You are welcome to do that, if you can," returned Dick.

"But, we want you to furnish us with the right scheme," explained Samuel.

"I'll do that," said Dick, coldly, "if it agrees with the facts of the case, but not otherwise. If I find that young man is guilty, my evidence will go toward his conviction, that's flat."

The two lawyers exchanged a glance.

"This will never do," whispered Samuel. "He must be saved if possible. You must work for him, Mr. Bristol."

"Just what I am trying to do," Dick assured, "but so far the outlook is not promising. If he was in that house at two o'clock, how are we going to prove that he did not do the crime?"

"But, he was not there," urged Daniel. "We will fix that part of it ourselves, Mr. Bristol."

"He was there!" insisted Dick, "and nothing but false testimony will do away with the fact. And you won't get any false testimony out of me. Now, did he do the assassin's work, or did he not? That is the question."

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER HUNDRED ADVANCED.

THE lawyers seemed to be puzzled over this.

It looked as though they had expected greater help from the detective than they were likely to get. It was plain he would not aid them in any crooked work toward saving their client, and it was not probable that he would let them offer any *alibi* that was not based upon truth.

And that was just the situation. They had put Dick's honor to the test, as it were, and had found out that it was of the pure metal. And

the detective had the advantage all on his side. He was not working for pay, but was, indeed, the—Independent Detective!

But, back of all this there was gold in the old lawyers' make-up, too. They had taken the case upon the strong conviction that the young man was innocent of the murder, in spite of all the evidence against him—in fact, had invited Dick to make the fullest kind of investigation.

And yet, still further back, was the secret intention of resorting to crafty scheming, if other means were likely to fail. This, however, as a last resort, had been knocked away by the firm stand Dick had taken. There was now nothing for them to do but to make the best fight they could upon honest grounds, unless they did otherwise without the assistance of the detective.

"But, what is your own candid opinion about the young man's guilt?" asked Daniel.

"I have two opinions about it," was Dick's response. "I can believe him guilty, or I can believe him innocent."

"But that isn't to the point," urged Samuel. "Which of these views do you favor? But I think it is plain to be seen that you think him guilty."

"I do, and I don't," answered Dick. "There are some indications that point in his favor, and as I am trying to prove him innocent if he is innocent, I am giving them full weight."

"And what are these indications?"

"I prefer not to disclose them yet."

"Then what has brought you here at all?"

This was from Daniel, rather imperiously, it seemed.

"I will tell you that, sir," responded Dick, evenly. "I came to report; to tell you that the evidence, as it stands now with the police, is going to hang the prisoner. That is to say, if the real murderer is not found, assuming Crandford to be innocent, then he must swing. Besides this, I want to get information, if you can give any."

"Then the *alibi* is out of the question?"

"I think it is, entirely. Don't see how you'll prove it."

"Well, what do you want to ask, then? You are a stubborn mystery in yourself, Mr. Bristol."

"Yes, perhaps I am. I want to ask what you know about young Crandford's private life. Do you know whether he is married or not?"

"We don't know if he is married," was the straight answer. "We suppose and believe him to be single. It is news to us if he is married, sir. But, what is in the wind now?"

"There is a woman in the case," exclaimed Dick.

"Ha!"

So they both exclaimed, and Daniel added:

"The devil's to pay, now, with a woman in the affair."

"Yes, there is a woman in the case, and a mysterious one," Dick set forth. "I did think I would not mention this to you, but have decided to do so. You may make something out of it, with the prisoner. Do not let him know how you gained the pointer, however."

"All right; we will take care of that. But, what part is this woman playing?"

"That, too, I am not ready to disclose. I am afraid, though, that the young man is hurting himself to protect this woman, but in what way I do not yet clearly see. I am not disposed to think that she is a murderer, however; I have another suspicion with regard to that."

"You talk in riddles, sir."

"Not with regard to what I want to make known. You know now that there is a woman in the case; that she is in some way concerned in this affair; that the prisoner is protecting her by his silence, if in no other way. There is enough in that for you to make something out of. But I doubt your being able to draw Crandford into saying anything."

"It is worth the trying, anyhow," declared Daniel.

"And if you gain anything, I must request that you give me the benefit of it," added Dick. "Without me you would not have the point to work on."

"We will do so," promised Daniel, "if it is anything favorable to the young man. Otherwise we may not."

"As you please about that," waived Dick.

"And is that all?" inquired Daniel.

"One other point. Do you know why Susan Roylan is interested in this Mrs. Pratson?"

"We do not," was the answer. "She has never taken any one into her confidence with regard to that, so far as we know."

"Well, and this is all for the time being. The funeral of the murdered woman takes place

to-morrow. After that it is probable Susan Roylan will have her will drawn up at once."

"We consider it very probable, considering her advanced age."

"And the law allows her to dispose of her money as she will, without any restriction?"

"She must leave something to Crandford; a nominal sum if she pleases."

"To make the will binding, and keep him out afterward?"

"Exactly; that will balk him afterward."

"Can you put off making such a will for some days?"

"We can delay it a little, of course."

"I want you to do so. You will understand my reason for this later on, when my work is done."

"Then you do not mean to give up the case?"

"Who has said anything about giving up? I shall give up when the mystery is cleared; not before, so long as there is anything to work on."

Dick went away, and allowed the case to rest for the time being.

Before proceeding further he wanted to learn what success Kodak Kate had had in shadowing the veiled woman.

At the appointed hour that evening he presented himself at her home, and was as cordially received as he could wish. The little lady detective was all smiles for him.

But this might be attributed partly to the wonderful success she had had in her work and the satisfaction she had been anticipating of making her report of it to Deadwood Dick.

Dick made it his first care to return the money and paper that had been intrusted to him.

After that, and the first greetings having been exchanged, Kate went ahead and told what she had accomplished.

Bristol was not stinting with his praise.

"Kodak Kate, you are a jewel!" he cried. "You seem like a second self to me, in your manner of working. You have done nobly, and I must compliment you."

"Thank you," was the blushing response, "but now what use are we to make of what I have gained! You are the one to do the directing. I may be able to follow, but I am no leader."

"You say that, after what you have just revealed?" cried Dick. "You can never make me believe it. I am sure you have some plan outlined, even now."

"No, I do not think I have; but there is one point—"

"Pardon me for interrupting," Dick broke in, "but I'm going to guess what it is, if I can."

"You are welcome to try."

"I want to see if our minds do not take the same view of a certain chance I have discovered during your recital."

"Well, what do you guess?" the little lady asked. "But I am sure you will find your mistake, for I could never hope to catch at points you would see. Would you have me forget that you are Deadwood Dick?"

"Not at all; nor that you are Kodak Kate, the best and bravest lady detective in the profession."

"Oh! do not try flattery. But, what is the point?"

"It hinges upon this woman, the prisoner, and her visit to him in her disguise of deep mourning."

"I believe you do guess it aright," Kate acknowledged.

"I know I do, now," Dick declared positively. "Dare you undertake the role, Miss Burton?"

"I dare, and will, if you think I can play it," was the answer.

"And I see no reason why you should not. In fact, I know you can. A man is not such an observer of woman's wear as a woman is, and Crandford would never suspect the deception at first."

"But my voice, how would it be about that?"

"I have heard what you can do in the way of imitation," was Dick's reply. "I leave that to your art as a detective."

"Then we will try it to-morrow morning?"

"Yes; let it be to-morrow morning. I will meet you at the jail at nine."

It was talked over at length, and the plan fully arranged. And when the business part of their interview had come to an end, then the lines of their conversation fell in pleasanter places.

While they were talking there came a ring at the bell.

The call was responded to by Mrs. Burton, who came in, bearing a letter.

It was one addressed to Kate, and it was seen at a glance that it bore a special stamp.

"It is from my mysterious employer," Kate

announced, as soon as she glanced at the writing. "I must see what it says."

She tore it open with baste and drew forth a sheet of paper, and another bill of one hundred dollars in amount, a twin to the one first received. And the note, which she read aloud, was as follows:

"To KODAK KATE THE DETECTIVE:—

"Here find one hundred dollars. Please accept it, and draw out of the Roylan case immediately. I have made a discovery which answers all I wanted to learn. You can do no good by looking further. There is an important reason why you should obey this request, as I believe you will. Believe me—

"A FRIEND IN SECRET."

Yes, the detective pards had "struck it rich."

CHAPTER XI.

DICK'S RIGHT BOWER.

ABOUT nine o'clock on the following morning Bristol was on hand at the jail.

He had a talk with the jailer, and after that loitered around in the office as though waiting for some one to join him.

Finally another person arrived, a woman clad in deepest mourning.

She, too, had some talk with the jailer, and Dick was informed of her arrival.

Together they were admitted into the jail proper, where they paused for a brief consultation.

This ended, Dick went down the corridor to the cell where Howard Crandford was confined, but stopped before passing into sight, just back of the door.

He had moved with great caution, and there was little chance that the prisoner could have heard him. When he had taken up his position there, he signaled to the woman.

She and the jailer came down to the door of the cell; the jailer opened it and the woman entered.

At sight of her the prisoner started up with a look of alarm.

"You here?" he exclaimed in hoarse whisper.

"Yes," the woman responded, in a choking voice.

"And what has brought you here again?"

The woman had dropped upon the stool, and now covered her face with her hands, under her vail.

"It has all been discovered," she sobbed.

Deadwood Dick did not know who the woman was, he could never have guessed it to be Kodak Kate.

"What has been discovered," the prisoner demanded. "Tell me the worst, and at once."

"You—you know without asking," was the sobbed answer.

"About that money?"

"Yes; and—and—"

But her sobbing overcame her power of utterance, and she could not finish. It seemed plain that some terrible thing had happened.

"There, now, don't take on like this, Celia," the prisoner said, soothingly, laying a hand upon her shoulder. "Tell me all about it, and let me see how bad it is. Perhaps it is not so bad as you imagine."

"It—it is worse—than you can think," she sobbed.

"Have you had to tell all about it?"

"Yes; I had to tell."

"Fool! You did not have to tell. Why didn't you keep your promise?"

"Oh, you can't understand," the woman moaned. "You do not know what I have suffered. I had to make the disclosure."

"Then I am doomed, that is certain. Crandford Ingerslee will hang me, hang me as sure as fate, if he can. But, I little care, now. One is but a degree worse than the other."

"No, no, he cannot hang you," the woman sobbed. "You have only to tell the full truth, now, and—and—"

The little detective was going as far as she dared, and was in danger any moment of going too far, and betraying the trick she was imposing.

"Thunder!" the excited prisoner cried, in a fierce whisper, "isn't that just what you have done? And isn't that the very weapon he will use against me? What has he done to you? Has he turned you out?"

The woman sobbed, making no response.

"Can't you see how it is?" Crandford insisted. "They have proved that I was in the house at about the time of the crime. Now what will save my neck? When they learn about the money, then it will be all up with me. That will settle everything. See what you have done!"

Deadwood Dick was taking in every word, for

the prisoner's talk was in a tone sufficiently loud for him to overhear.

The prince of detectives smiled, too, as the words fell upon his ears. By degrees he was grasping the truth of a state of things that would be a surprise to the police when made known.

"But I could not help it," the woman protested.

"I know better," Crandford grated. "You vowed that you would not allow even torture to wring the truth from you."

"But it was forced! Can't you understand? Oh, you do not know—"

"Yes, I do know—that you have done the very worst thing you possibly could. And I know, too, that the accursed detectives have got upon your track."

"Impossible!" the woman cried, with well-simulated alarm.

"Not impossible, but the fact. That hundred-dollar bill you let get out of your hands has given you away, somehow."

"But, tell me, what is going to be done?" the woman suddenly demanded. "How are you going to save yourself?"

"I can't save myself, that I can see."

"But you did not kill the woman, did you? You have—"

"Of course I didn't kill her. Would to God that I knew who did, then it would be of some use trying to prove an *alibi*. You know that I didn't kill her, that I would be the last person in the world to— But, let me see your face; fool that I was not to demand it in the first place. I might be fooled in this way—"

He had laid a hand upon her vail, to lift it, but she was upon her feet in a moment, and his hand was knocked aside.

In the same moment Deadwood Dick swung open the door, Kodak Kate darted out, the prisoner attempting to seize her, but the heavy-barred door immediately swung to with a clang, barring the prisoner just as he was acting upon an impulse to follow.

"My curse upon you!" he cried, as he saw Deadwood Dick.

"Thank you!" responded Dick. "But, that don't harm me any. I'm going to save your neck, Crandford."

"I little care whether you do or not," was the vicious response. "But I want you to tell me one thing, since you have no doubt overheard all that passed."

"Well, what is that?"

"Who was that woman who was in here?"

"I will not answer, though I will tell you it was not Celia Ingerslee, as you supposed."

"I know it wasn't now, and I curse you for the trick you played upon me. I want you to leave me to my fate and spare that woman."

"But you are innocent of the murder, as you still insist, and as I now more firmly believe, and the right one must be put in your place. That is what I am going to do."

"If you can, you mean! But, you can't do it. I am as good as hanged already, and I don't see what you can do to save me."

"See here, you still swear that you didn't kill Phoebe Roylan?"

"I do. I am innocent of that."

"And you do not know who did?"

"I do not, I swear it."

"Was the woman alive when you left the house?"

The prisoner looked hard at Dick, as if debating how to answer.

"I know that you were in the house, and you know I know it," Dick urged. "I cannot see the sense of your holding out so stubbornly. You have just now as good as confessed all about that part of it. Answer my question."

"Yes, I will," the young man whispered, hoarsely. "When I left the house the woman was alive and asleep. Now I have told you everything that I can tell. You are a devil at detective work, Deadwood Dick; you can draw out of a man anything you please."

Dick had to smile.

"That is all in your mind," he said. "But now I have sure grounds to work upon, for I believe your statement. Now to find the guilty one."

"Which it may not be easy to do, I am of the opinion."

"And it may be easier than we imagine."

"But will you do me a favor, Deadwood Dick?"

"I make no promises where I do not know what about," was the guarded response.

"Well, I'll tell you; if you do get at the murderer, and make out a case, will you help me to prove that I was not in that house?"

"I imagine your lawyers will take care of

that," was the reply. "There seems to me little hope of your proving it, however."

"Then there is no hope of your fastening the crime upon another," was the reminder. "You know why I was in that house at that hour. Once let a jury of twelve sane men get hold of that, and they will render a verdict of guilty without leaving their seats."

"True enough; but the fact that I do know why you were in the house, is enough to clear you of the murder, provided another person can be found who had something to gain by the death of Phoebe Roylan. The fact that you had nothing to gain, but all to lose, by her death, is a strong point in your favor. But, we shall see how it will come out. Give me a little time, and if you are innocent I'll save your neck for you, though I don't promise you anything further."

With that, and some further remarks, Dick went out and rejoined Kodak Kate, and they went away together.

"Well," asked Kate, "how did I play the part?"

"To perfection," cried Dick. "You are the best 'pard' I ever had."

"I am glad you think so well of my poor efforts. It gives me confidence in myself."

"And that is all a detective needs," declared Dick. "But what do you think of our case now? Can you see light ahead?"

"Yes, and plenty of it," was the answer, "but it is through a glass darkly, yet. But we know where old Phoebe Roylan's money went to, for one thing."

"Yes, true enough. We know that it was stolen out of that house on the night of the crime, and by Howard Crandford. Further, that it was passed over to this woman, Celia Ingerslee."

"There is some secret between those two. Some powerful reason why that money had to be obtained and paid over to the woman. What it is, remains for us to find out; but the mystery of the murder is no nearer being solved than it was."

"I am not sure about that," declared Dick. "I have a suspicion, but what it will amount to is yet to be learned. But that photograph you have of the woman—I want that to show to the lawyers, to see whether they know the person or not, though I don't hope to gain anything by showing it to them."

The picture, though neither attached much importance to it, was passed into Dick's keeping. After a talk they parted, Kate going home to lay off her disguise, and Dick turning his steps in the direction of the lawyers' office. There a small but very gratifying bit of information awaited him.

CHAPTER XII.

A FRUITLESS SEARCH.

LION-HEARTED Dick was soon again at the office of the brothers.

Oliver Upp was at the railing the moment he entered, with his usual inquiry.

But this time Dick was in no mood for parley or delay, and opened the gate himself and walked in, much to the horror of that small youth.

"You're not responsible for what you can't help, my boy," Dick said, smiling. "I can see that one of him is in, and as I am in a hurry I won't stop to go through all the forms this time."

Samuel Kincarth had looked up, at the unusual occurrence—looked up with both eyes this time, and he stared until Dick was at the desk where the old lawyer was sitting.

"You have not been announced," he observed, coldly.

"I'm here to speak for myself, this time," declared Dick. "Don't let's spend any time monkeying. Do you know this face?"

He dropped the photograph upon the desk before the old gentleman.

It was taken up and looked at, and as the lawyer studied the face, Dick noticed that his lips twitched, and that his eyes dimmed.

"You have seen the face?" Dick questioned.

"It revives a memory of the past," was the answer.

"Then it merely reminds you of one you have known?"

"Yes."

"Years ago?"

"Twenty-five, at least."

"Well, it isn't a likeness of any person you knew, then, for this was only recently taken, and the original is just as you see her."

"I know, I know; it was only the recollection

revived. But who is this person? And what are you doing with her photograph? Has this anything to do with the case you are on?"

"Yes, it has much to do with it," was the answer. "This is the woman in the case, as we always say. This is the woman in whom Howard Crandford is interested. Do you know that Phoebe Roylan drew twelve hundred dollars out of the bank on the day before she was killed?"

The old lawyer looked the surprise he felt, and his hands twitched nervously.

"No; did she?" he demanded.

"She did. What is more, that money has been turned over to the woman whose picture this is."

"Goodness me! How much more of a tangle is this thing going to get into, Mr. Bristol?"

"I think it is rather getting out of a tangle," corrected Dick. "We are coming out into the light, now."

"But why should Phoebe Roylan pay such a sum over to this woman? What is she to the murdered woman? Come, make it plain."

"I don't know whether you are trying to blind me, or whether your question is all straight," remarked Dick. "Anyhow, if it is the former, you can't do it. I have got at the bottom on one point."

"Explain, explain!"

"Well, Howard Crandford was in the house on that night, and his business there was to steal that money to pay it over to this very woman. And he made a thorough job of the undertaking, too."

The old lawyer could only stare.

"Are you more than human?" he cried. "How did you get at these facts?"

"By the most simple process in the world," Dick smilingly assured. "Nothing so very great about it. But what do you think of it all?"

"Think! Why, I think Howard Crandford is going to hang in spite of all that can be done to save him, that's what. I'm sorry that I ever called you into the affair. I will pay you handsomely if you will drop out of it."

Dick was now puzzled. What meant such a stand as this? These lawyers, it seemed, wanted to save Crandford at any cost.

He was silent a moment before he spoke.

"I don't know just how to take that remark," he finally said, "but rest assured that Deadwood Dick can't be bought off when once he has taken hold of a matter. But it isn't so black as it looks."

"I don't see how it could well be any darker."

"There is something more to be said. If Crandford didn't kill that woman, and I am of the opinion he didn't, who did do it?"

"Ha! then in spite of all you do think him innocent, do you?"

"Yes, I do consider him innocent, and I want to try to prove it. Unless I can, his fate is certain."

"But where does your suspicion point now? Is there any other person whom you look upon as probably the guilty one?"

"There is."

"Who is it?"

Deadwood Dick mentioned a name in a still lower tone.

"Good heavens!" the old man cried, "you can't mean it!"

"I mean it, or I would not mention it," Dick assured. "And I want all the help you can lend me toward finding it out. If the guilt is not to be placed there, I must then look upon Crandford's assertion as a blank lie, that's all."

"And you don't think he has lied?"

"I do not."

"But this other is too horrible to be given thought, Mr. Bristol."

"No more horrible than it would be in any case. A murder is a murder, and the worst of crimes."

Upon this point they held a long and earnest talk, in which Dick unfolded certain plans which were in his mind, to be brought into play if circumstances favored any of them.

One thing he learned, the thing to which reference was made at the close of the preceding chapter, that Susan Roylan had sent for her lawyers to come to her immediately after the funeral, and also that she wanted to employ another domestic in her household.

Armed with this latter particular, Dick lost no time in getting the information to Kodak Kate, telling her to apply for the place immediately through the lawyers, whom the old woman had requested to supply the want.

That word having been sent, Dick set out for the house of the crime, to see the old servant again, and to be in time for the funeral.

It was nearing the hour for the funeral, and

the street in front of the house was black with people.

Dick pushed through to the door, and was admitted as before.

He passed immediately down to the basement.

The old domestic was there.

"I see you bear up well under all this excitement," Dick observed.

"A body can do what a body has to do," was the response.

"But how is it with poor Miss Roylan?" the detective inquired. "Does she hold out yet?"

"Yes; but for the life of me I don't see how she does it. She has changed—you wouldn't believe how she has changed."

"How do mean changed? What is different about her?"

"I have the idea that she is onbalanced in the mind, or is gettin' so, why, she won't hardly leave me out of her sight, when she has no other company 'round."

"Well, it is the horror of the affair. We can't wonder at that."

"And she don't sleep at night; leastways she didn't last night."

"That is natural, too. No doubt she will employ more help, now, in order to have you with her all the time."

"Yes; she is going to do that, sir. She told me so this mornin'."

"It is a wise thing. But, what I wanted to ask you, there is nothing new in regard to the mystery, is there?"

"Not a thing, sir. It is the same as ever. But, then, there can't be, for it is plain enough who done the crime, and that is all we want to know."

To this Dick agreed, and after some further words exchanged, left her.

The hour for the funeral soon came, after that, and Dick took careful note of everything that fell under his observation.

Susan Roylan was present, of course, clad in deepest black, her face hid behind a veil, and she trembled and tottered so that two women had to assist her.

She did not look at the dead when the coffin was opened, nor did she once lift her veil from her face.

Dick noted that the arrangements were indicative of the Catholic faith, and a priest was in attendance, a young man.

When the body was carried away, the company following, Dick took the chance to make a thorough exploration of the house.

The police were in charge of the place, and everything was free to him. The old servant was one of the two women who had assisted the aged chief mourner, and no one remained save the officers.

Dick looked almost everywhere, the officers aiding him all they were able. But the search was fruitless. Not a single suspicious thing was discovered, and certainly nothing to strengthen the suspicion against Susan Roylan, that suspicion which had forced itself upon the detective's mind.

Perhaps he was disappointed, but if he was, no one with him could detect it, but all were struck with the thorough way in which he did his work.

By the time the women could be expected back, he had finished, and was standing in the hall talking with the officers, when there came a ring at the bell.

One of the policemen opened the door, and there was a young woman, with something suggestive of a housemaid about her looks.

Deadwood Dick immediately recognized his noble little ally, Kodak Kate.

No look of recognition passed between them, and Kate asked for Miss Roylan.

She was informed that she had not yet returned from the funeral, and was let into the rear sitting-room to await her coming.

Dick wanted to know what the result of this move would be and waited in the hall, still talking with the policemen, until the women returned. And it was not long after that when the result was evident.

Kodak Kate followed the older domestic down to the basement, and Dick going down soon after was informed that she had been engaged.

Satisfied on this point and knowing that he need have no further concern for anything of importance that was to be brought to light there, Dick set out to work in another direction.

CHAPTER XIII.

PLAYING FOR POINTERS.

DEADWOOD DICK was ere long at the residence of Crandal Ingerslee.

The door was opened in response to his ring by the same trim-looking girl in the white apron and smart cap, whom we have seen before.

"Is Mr. Crandal Ingerslee at home?" Dick inquired.

He did not want to see the man, but made this inquiry to be sure of his ground before proceeding further.

"No, sir; he is not."

So he was informed, promptly enough.

"Then perhaps Mrs. Ingerslee is at home," he added.

"Yes, sir," the girl admitted; "she is within, sir. Will you see her?"

"I desire to see her, yes," Dick admitted correctly. "Tell her a gentleman from the lawyers' office."

Directing him to the hall seat, the girl disappeared, soon returning to admit him into the reception room, as seemed to be the rule of the house.

In a little time the woman came down.

Dick recognized her immediately as the original of the photograph in his pocket.

"You desire to see me?" she asked.

"Yes, madam," Dick responded. "I am here on a matter of importance."

"What is it, sir? if I may ask."

"It concerns the arrest of Howard Crandford, madam."

The woman paled, and appeared ready to fall in a faint, so great was the shock she experienced.

She dropped upon a chair, trembling in every limb.

"I—I know nothing about that," she gasped. Dick smiled grimly.

"I happen to know better," he declared.

"What do you know?"

"I know that Howard Crandford owed you a thousand dollars. That in order to discharge the debt, he entered Phoebe Roylan's room to steal the money. Being detected in the theft, he murdered the woman in order—"

"No, no!" the woman interrupted, excitedly, "he did not kill her!"

"How do you know he did not, madam?"

"He has told me so."

The woman was unable to hold out longer, with the searching eyes of Deadwood Dick upon her.

"Well, are you willing to try to save him?" Dick asked.

"I can't, oh! I can't," the woman cried despairingly.

"You believe he did not do the murder?"

"I am sure he did not."

"But he will hang, unless every effort is made to save him."

"I know, I know; but what can I do?"

"You will have to tell all you know about the matter. It must be shown and proven why he entered the house at that late hour."

"But that will send him to the gallows, sure. He has told me so. I cannot do that, sir, indeed I can not. Besides, he would not want me to, I know."

"We are not considering what he wants," declared Dick. "A suspicion of the murder has fallen upon another person, but it must be shown why Howard Crandford was there."

"Upon whom has suspicion fallen?"

"I will not disclose that to you, but it is true."

"But I cannot reveal the truth, sir; I will not do it. My husband would kill me were he to know."

"What is Howard Crandford to you?" demanded Dick.

"Oh! spare me, spare me!" was the appeal.

"You must confess all," Dick insisted. "It will be better for you to do so, I assure you."

"But my husband! He will kill me if he ever learns. No, no! I cannot tell, I will not tell. Howard Crandford has forbid my telling."

"Then my duty is plain," warned Dick. "You must be arrested and held with him answerable for the crimes. You may take your choice; a confession may save you the arrest."

The woman dropped her face upon her hands, weeping.

"How did you ever learn?" she sobbingly inquired.

"Crime cannot be hidden," was the response.

"And if I tell you, will you spare me?"

"I make no promise. If you are innocent you may escape."

"And I am innocent, innocent of any part in this robbery or murder."

"Tell me, then, what is the prisoner to you? I must know that point, or I cannot accept your statement."

"He was my—my lover, before I married Mr. Ingerslee."

"I thought so. Perhaps he is your lover still, and you are not blameless in all respects."

"No, no! He is my worst enemy!"

So the woman cried, and she looked up, her eyes flashing.

"Then why need you hesitate about exposing him, and let him suffer as he deserves?"

Dick knew well enough why, but he wanted to draw the woman into further statements, if he could.

"Can't you understand?" she cried. "He was my lover, as I have confessed to you. Must I say more? He would betray me to my husband, who, in his jealous fury, would murder me."

"But, this money?"

"I borrowed it from my husband to lend to Crandford."

"He forced you to do that?"

"Yes."

"And still he had the honor, to call it that, to do a deed of crime to pay it back to you. How do you account for that?"

"He—he loves me."

"Ha! now I begin to see light ahead. He forced you to lend the money, using his knowledge of something of your life to threaten with, and you borrowed that sum from your husband, giving some excuse."

"Yes, yes. And I had promised to pay it back at a certain time, and Howard had regard enough for me to make every desperate effort to get it and put it into my hands."

"The most honorable dishonorable fellow I ever heard of," Dick mused.

"But, you will spare me the exposure, will you not?" the woman pleaded, anxiously.

"You will have to trust to the march of events for that," Dick answered. "I can promise nothing. In what regard do you hold this man Crandford?"

"I hate him!" was the cry. "I hate him, but fear him. He holds the destruction of my happiness in his hands."

"And you do love your husband?"

"I do, truly and honestly. Oh! spare me, if you can!"

Deadwood Dick had his doubts about this statement, and with good reason.

The woman was one whose face did not impress him favorably. It was a face too strongly stamped with deceit.

"Yet," Dick reminded, "you thought enough of Crandford to visit him at the jail."

"I have not—"

"But you have," insisted Dick. "You have admitted seeing him since the crime was discovered. You went there in disguise of deepest mourning. Do not try to deny facts we are sure of."

"Well, I admit it, though I do not see how it ever came known to you. But I went to see about this mousey. I wanted to know whether it was blood-stained or not."

"And what did you learn?"

"He denied even having stolen it."

"And that satisfied you. Still you seem to know he had stolen it."

"Doesn't everything indicate it?"

"The same as it indicates his guilt of the greater crime."

"But I am sure he did not do that deed of blood, sir. He would not kill the very woman who would have willed him a fortune if she could."

Now Dick was coming to a point he desired to reach.

"But the evidence against him," he urged. "How are we going to get over that? It is positive."

"The only thing positive about it is that he was seen coming out of the house. Only for that he would never have been suspected."

"I am not so sure about that, Mrs. Ingerslee. There is the blood on his arm, or rather his sleeve; and then the missing knife."

"The blood I can account for—"

She caught herself quickly, and stopped short.

"You can account for that, eh?" observed Dick. "How do you account for it, then, Mrs. Ingerslee?"

"The words came out without thought, sir," the woman tried to explain, with confusion. "They mean nothing. I was thinking—"

"Nonsense!" cried Dick. "Tell me what you know, and at once."

With this he displayed a pair of handcuffs, twirling them in his fingers as he eyed the woman narrowly.

It had the desired effect.

"He—he was in this house that night, sir," she confessed. "He had come to pay me the money. I had left a door open so that he could enter. He came to my room, left the money,

and was going away when my husband heard him."

"Ah-ha!"

"He sprung after him, and they met and grappled in the hall, where they had a furious fight. My husband got the worst of it, and was left bleeding and half senseless on the floor of the hall. That was when and where Howard Crandford got blood upon his sleeve."

"But the knife," Dick intimated. "Did he use a knife in fighting your husband?"

"Heavens! how did you know about that?" the woman cried. "Are you gifted with powers more than human? He did have a knife, but did not use it. I found it in the hall, while the struggle was going on, and hid it."

"Give me that knife immediately," Dick commanded.

The woman rose to get it, and Dick smiled at the success of his ruse. He had never hoped to strike a truth with a shot so at random.

CHAPTER XIV.

SUSAN ROYLAN'S WILL.

Two things had been upon Dick's mind all along.

One had been, to account for the blood upon the prisoner's sleeve; the other, to learn what had become of his knife.

Now, it would seem, the first-mentioned had been explained.

Learning what he had concerning that night's work, on the part of Howard Crandford, he had come to the conclusion that he had left his lodgings with the knife in his possession.

Knowing the danger of the evil mission upon which he was bent, it did not seem likely that he would go unarmed. And what handier or better weapon could he have than the bowie-knife? He had taken it, of course, as Dick had believed.

And now that point made sure of, had he used that weapon upon his aunt? And was he, after all, the murderer?

Presently the woman returned and laid the knife in Dick's hand.

Dick looked at it critically.

It was dark with long disuse, and there certainly were no recent stains upon it, or evidence that it had been cleaned.

Taking a small rule from his vest pocket, Dick measured the width of the blade, and found it to be an inch and three-quarters.

This was just the size of the weapon with which the murder had been done, a strong point.

The woman watched this operation, and when he had done, Dick told her of the coincidence, to call it such.

"Heavens!" she gasped, "then I shall have hanged him!"

"It is a terrible piece of evidence against him, that is true," Dick agreed.

"Oh! why did I not think of this before? Why did I ever mention this to you, sir? Go! Go at once, and leave me!"

"I am about ready to take my leave," Dick assured. "But before I go let me impress one thing upon your mind. That is, that if you are called upon to testify, you had better tell the whole truth. It will be better for you if you do."

"Go! That is all I ask of you, sir. My husband may appear at any moment, and would discover all. You do not know the danger you are in! Should he find you here he would kill you."

Dick smiled at that. He had little fear upon that score.

"Two might play at that game," he reminded. "But, as I have no excuse for staying longer, I will now go. Bear in mind what I have said."

Little more was said, beyond another appeal on the part of the woman, to be spared any exposure, and Dick was soon away from the house and making his way in the direction of the jail.

"Well," he mused, as he hastened along, "my still hunt is progressing. I am getting at facts by piecemeal. Perhaps I shall have the whole thing in my hands after awhile. But what of Howard Crandford? Only one thing stands between him and the rope; and that is, the truth of my other suspicion."

Arriving at the jail, he was again admitted into the cell.

"Well, what do you think of this?" he asked the prisoner, displaying the bowie-knife.

"Where did you get that?" the man excitedly demanded.

"I found it where you lost it," was the answer. "In the residence of Crandford Ingerslee."

"Curse you!" the prisoner cried, "you could

bring a secret out of the middle of the earth, I believe. Do you know this is going to hang me?"

"No, I don't know that it will," responded Dick, easily, "though it is a terrible point against you. Do you still declare that you are innocent?"

"I do. I still swear that I am innocent. This blade never touched the body of that poor woman."

"But it was in your possession at the time when you were in the house."

"You have cornered me, and I must admit it."

"And you lied when you said you did not know where it was. It all tells badly against you."

"And wouldn't any man have lied—lied like a trooper—under the same circumstances? I think so. I knew that this one thing, more than any other, would condemn me, if it needed anything further."

"I have just come from having an interview with Celia Ingerslee," informed Dick.

"And of course you know everything, now."

"Everything except one."

"And that is—"

"Who killed Phœbe Roylan. But I am determined to make one more effort to find out. Do you still assert that you have no suspicion who did the deed?"

"I do. I am puzzled more than I can express."

"Has it ever struck you that it may have been — —?"

Dick whispered a name.

"Good heavens! You cannot mean it!"

"I do mean it, and only one thing will lead me to drop the matter and look no further."

"What is that one thing?"

"A confession from you that you did it yourself."

"Which you will never get. I did not kill Phœbe Roylan; and now that other things have been ferreted out by you, and there is no longer reason why I should be silent, I am going to make a fight for my life."

"That decides it, then. I go on, and press the matter to the end. If I am wrong in my suspicion, however, I am afraid it will go hard with you."

"And so am I. But, since you have mentioned it, I do not think it is impossible. But it is horrible—horrible!"

This was uttered with such genuine force and feeling, that it decided Deadwood Dick for once and all in the opinion that Howard Crandford was indeed innocent of the awful crime.

From the jail, Dick went to a place agreed upon between him and his ally to which word to him was to be sent.

When he reached there he was just in time to meet a messenger with a note for him.

Paying the bearer well, and telling him to loiter around the Roylan house in waiting for another job of the same kind, Dick opened the note and read it.

It informed him that Susan Roylan had sent for the lawyers to come to the house and make her will, which she had decided to have done immediately. And a hint was given Dick that he might invent some way to come with them.

In this last Dick saw that once again did his little helper and he agree fully upon a point.

Leaving word at the place concerning his intended movements, Dick lost no time in presenting himself at the lawyers' office.

Both the lawyers were present when he entered, and were talking together in an excited way. And Dick was with them before the office-boy had time to think about intercepting him.

"You are going to make Susan Roylan's will?" Dick asked.

"How did you know that?" they both demanded.

"It is my business to know a little of everything that is going on in the matter," Dick quietly returned.

"Yes, we are going there," was the acknowledgment, then. "But we are debating what excuse to offer for delaying the signing of this will. There will be no reasonable excuse for delaying it."

"I have changed my mind about that," Dick apprised.

A word of warning in the note from Kodak Kate had led him to this.

"You have!" in surprise.

"Yes."

"And for what reason? You were determined upon it only a short time ago."

"I have my reason, rest assured. Besides, have you any right to alter any plans this wo-

man may have? Hasn't she full and sole right to dispose of this wealth as she sees fit?"

"She certainly has, sir; and it was upon that we were considering. She has the right and power, and the only thing we could do would be to make some delay in responding."

"Let us go, and at once, and let the will be made. I will go with you as a witness whom you have chosen."

"You? She will recognize you, and—"

"Will she?" And then and there Deadwood Dick made a change in his appearance that caused the two old gentlemen to look at him in amazement.

Had they met him upon the street, or had he entered their office in this disguise, they would never have suspected his identity. Oliver Upp, the office boy, almost dislocated his jaws, so wide did he allow his mouth to drop open.

"There is little danger that she will know you," Samuel admitted. "Come, and we will go and have the business over with."

When they came to the house they were shown into the little rear sitting-room, where Susan Roylan was awaiting them, sitting stiff and passionless, seemingly, in a great easy-chair.

The window was open, to admit light, and Dick had a good chance to study the woman's features.

Her face seemed to picture a heart as cold and unfeeling as stone itself.

"Who is this man?" she inquired, indicating Dick.

"Merely a person whom we have brought with us to witness the instrument," Mr. Daniel answered.

This seemed to satisfy her, and Dick took a back seat where he was out of the way, but where he could observe everything.

When the lawyers were ready, the old woman proceeded to dictate what they should write, and with the keenest judgment and showing of mental strength.

A merely nominal sum was set apart for Howard Crandford, provided he should be acquitted of the charge against him. Then everything else was left to the woman, Mrs. Pratson.

The will was finally in order, and was duly signed and attested, after which it was given to the keeping of the lawyers.

"Now I am ready to die," the woman sighed, letting go her will power and falling back into the chair, limp and seemingly exhausted; "and I care not how soon the summons comes. I want to join my sister in that better world, if I be permitted to enter there. Pray go, and leave me alone with my sorrow."

CHAPTER XV.

LUCKY CLEW; QUICK WORK.

DEADWOOD DICK was more puzzled than ever.

Surely his suspicion against Susan Roylan must be groundless, in spite of all the points that went to strengthen it.

If guilty of the awful crime, could she talk like this, and act the part to such perfection? He did not deem it possible. And yet it was not by any means impossible.

A woman capable of murdering her sister in cold blood, would certainly be equal to almost anything else. But these words had about them the genuine ring as of coming from the heart, and Deadwood Dick was, as said, puzzled.

Let us consider, for a moment, upon what grounds Dick's suspicion had been formed.

First, it had come like a flash upon his mind, at his first meeting with the woman. It had refused to be driven out, but had gained a hold upon him. There was an impelling motive in the dispute the sisters had had over their property. And then the aversion she had to looking upon the dead woman's face, or of going to the room where the crime had been done.

All these things had lent their weight toward strengthening the suspicion, and once formed, it was hard to break away from it. In fact, nothing but the proof, one way or the other, could settle the vexing question.

And that proof was what must be had, and what the detective and his able little ally were determined upon having.

Dick accompanied the lawyers from the room, and stopping to exchange a word with Kodak Kate in the hall, followed them from the house.

"Well," observed Mr. Daniel, "that business is done."

"And the will is a fact," added Mr. Samuel.

"Which seems to dispose of Howard Crandford's chances, whether innocent or not," observed Dick.

"Not if your suspicion proves correct," said Mr. Samuel. "In that case it can be success-

fully contested. But I doubt the correctness of that suspicion, now."

"And so do I," declared Mr. Daniel. "You heard the woman's parting words to us. Do you imagine a woman guilty of so heinous a crime could talk like that? I do not."

"My experience has taught me to trust little to appearances," remarked Dick, "for seeming angels often turn out to be very devils. But impressions, while often correct, are sometimes away off the truth, and it may be so in this case. I admit that I am mystified."

"But what are you going to do about it?" asked Mr. Samuel.

"Give me a little time," answered Dick. "That woman's guilt or innocence is going to appear before many days, maybe before many hours."

When he parted company with the lawyers, Dick went once more to the jail.

It was his intention to inform Crandford that all hope was lost, and that his doom was about sealed.

By that means, since the man had declared he would make a fight for his life, he hoped to draw something out of him more than he had yet told.

It was not unlikely that the fellow had some suspicion against some one, nor was it altogether improbable that he might know who really had done the crime. Dick meant to make one more effort.

When he arrived there he was none too soon, for the hour was about up when the jail would be closed against visitors for the day.

But that would have made little difference in Dick's case, perhaps. Still, he was well satisfied to have it as it was.

"Your woman in black has been here again," the jailer informed him.

"She has, eh?" Dick made response, in some surprise.

"Yes; has just gone away."

Dick was admitted, and the two passed along to the cell where Crandford was held prisoner.

The jailer opened the door, and Dick was about to step in when he stopped short with a start of surprise.

Instead of Howard Crandford, the cell held the woman, Celia Ingerslee!

"Your prisoner is gone!" Dick cried.

"Gone!"

Greatest excitement prevailed immediately.

The alarm was given, and a search was instituted without delay.

Deadwood Dick had not stopped a moment to speak to the woman, but had hurried out and away.

He understood the escape at a glance. The woman had put her skirt, shawl, hat and heavy veil upon Crandford, and in the disguise he had walked boldly out.

The jailer, never dreaming of such a thing being attempted, had had no suspicion whatever until the discovery was made.

Dick made all haste in the direction of the prisoner's lodging, believing the prisoner would go there immediately, for the one purpose of laying off the disguise, and perhaps to provide himself with means of escape.

This turn of events made the matter even more mysterious than ever. Now it looked as though Crandford's guilt was positive.

When he neared the destination in view he saw the disguised man ahead of him, walking as swiftly as was consistent with safety from exciting suspicion.

And Dick saw something more. Behind the escaping prisoner, and keeping pace with him, was another man, whom from a description he had had of him, Dick recognized as Crandal Ingerslee.

"Whew!" Dick whistled. "There is going to be a humming on the breeze now. I see through the whole thing. Ingerslee has followed his wife to the jail, and thinks this is she. He must be blind as a bat, not to see the cheat."

The escaping prisoner went straight to his lodging, and let himself into the house with a key.

Ingerslee followed, rung the bell, passed some words with the person who came in response to the summons, and also entered.

Deadwood Dick was right behind, and when the door was opened to him he displayed his badge and demanded to be shown as quickly as possible to the room that had been occupied by Howard Crandford.

The servant led the way, but before they had reached the door of the room the sounds of a struggle were heard.

Deadwood Dick was upon the scene quickly, and saw two men engaged in a desperate fight.

With weapons in hand, the detective ordered them to desist, but Ingerslee paid no attention

to him, and it was clear that he was seeking the life of his antagonist.

Seeing this to be the case, Dick had to interfere, which he did with no gentle hand. But the worst came of it. Suddenly the enraged husband turned upon him, displaying a strength Dick had not given him credit for, and while Dick was defending himself against his attack the prisoner escaped.

Crandford had grabbed up a hat, and tearing off the skirt, darted out into the hall and away like a shot, sending back a laugh of derision as he disappeared.

The struggle lasted for some moments, and by the time Dick had finally disengaged himself, and was trying to make the man understand that he was not in league with Crandford against him, Crandford had made good his escape.

"Curse my stupidity!" the man exclaimed. "He has escaped me. I took you to be his friend, helping him to get away."

"Yes, he has got away from us," agreed Dick, "but he will have to be sharp to elude the police. His escape is known all over the city by this time."

"And I took him to be my wife, fool that I was."

"What is this man to your wife?" Dick demanded.

"What is he to her? Curse him, he is her lover! But I will have his life. I swear it!"

"Let us get back to the jail without delay," advised Dick. "Your wife is there, a prisoner in his stead. Her action proves all your suspicion against her to be true."

They returned immediately, talking over the matter by the way.

Dick had a clearer understanding of it, now, and saw plainly that the woman and Crandford were two precious bad ones, at best.

When they arrived at the jail another surprise, and greater, awaited them there. The cell was open and the woman was gone. No one knew how, when, or by what means she had got away.

Deadwood Dick jumped immediately to the conclusion that the whole thing had been pre-arranged. If not that, then it was the doings of the woman entirely, and showed her to be a person of keenest shrewdness in the time of emergency.

The jailer protested that he knew nothing about it, and could not account for the disappearance. How the woman had ever managed to get out of the cell, was a mystery calculated to baffle them all. It was guessed that she must have been provided with keys and an additional disguise.

Deadwood Dick and the dishonored and enraged husband made a hasty examination of the cell, and Dick discovered something lying on the bed that gave him the key to the situation immediately.

One glance at his discovery, and he was out of that cell and away, too hasty even for Ingerslee to follow him. But Dick had told him to await his return.

What Dick had discovered consisted of two railroad tickets to a point in Washington, and knew immediately that flight was intended.

Hastening to the nearest station, he obtained two policemen, and in a little while they were at the railroad station ready for the guilty pair.

Within an hour a man and woman entered the station, a couple to whom Dick at once gave attention. If their game, they were in disguise, but that was looked for.

Their actions were nervous and hasty, and their glances at the clock were impatient.

Dick and the policemen kept their eyes upon them, Dick in disguise, too; and soon Dick observed something that made his reasonably sure of his prey. The woman felt in her pocket, and then gave a great start, speaking to the man in the greatest possible agitation.

The lost tickets, was Dick's thought, and he directed the officers to make the arrest.

It was done, and Dick stepped forward before they could recover from the shock the arrest gave them.

Taking hold of the man's beard, it came off in his hand, and Howard Crandford stood revealed. It needed no unmasking of the woman, then, to discover who she was.

"A pretty cute trick," Dick remarked, with easy coolness, "but you see we have nipped your little game right in the bud. Take them back to the jail, officers, and see that they are locked up in cells too far apart to prevent their talking."

A crowd was beginning to collect, but it was all over now, and the policemen led the prisoners away in one direction while Dick

took his departure in another. The lost ground had been recovered, and now for the pushing ahead to the end.

CHAPTER XVI.

SOMETHING LITTLE EXPECTED.

DEADWOOD DICK'S first care was to visit the place where he should hear from his ally, if she found it necessary to communicate with him.

There was nothing there for him, and the day being spent, he repaired to his hotel to get something to eat and take an hour's rest. It had been a busy day with him.

He had little hope that the case would be cleared up very speedily now. It might take weeks to get at the bottom of the mystery. Certainly, he thought, it would require several days. It would be a game of patience, now. The prisoners, with nothing more to lose would be stubborn.

But he was nearer the end than he thought.

He had not finished his supper when what was his surprise to have Kodak Kate touch him on the arm.

"What is it?" he asked, in amazement.

"It is now or never," was the brief answer. "Come."

Dick dropped everything and accompanied her out. He knew that something of importance was at hand.

He understood this from the fact that she had come in person, and that she had not only been to their agreed-upon place of meeting, but had come on to the hotel with the hope of finding him there at that hour.

"Well, my brave little second self, what is it?" Dick asked, as soon as they were out upon the street.

"Susan Roylan has sent me out to bring a priest to the house," Kate informed him.

"You are the priest," she added, "and I have come for you."

"I'll be darned if I don't believe the gun is loaded too heavy for Deadwood Dick this time," Dick cried. "I have my doubts about playing that role, Kate, and that's the truth."

"You must play it," the little Snap Shot urged. "Susan Roylan is going to make a confession. She is in such a state of mind that I don't believe she is going to live twenty-four hours. It is now or never, as I told you."

"I see that I have got to undertake it," Dick agreed, "and, fortunately, I have been present at such scenes once or twice. I will do it, and do my best, even though a failure is the result. But I must have time to prepare. I will be there in one hour, and you may tell her so."

They parted, and Deadwood Dick, finding a cab, went in haste to get the two old lawyers. He wanted witnesses.

He had previously learned where they resided, and found them at home. With a hasty explanation of the situation, they were fired with interest, and accompanied Dick at once.

Dick's next move was to get the proper disguise, and as soon as that was accomplished the three hastened to the house where the priest was expected.

The lawyers stood back while Dick applied for admittance, for it would spoil everything if their presence was suspected. But it was Kodak Kate who opened the door, and Dick hurriedly explained his plan.

He was shown into the little sitting-room at the end of the hall, and when he had entered, and Kate admitted the lawyers, and accompanied them into the front room, where a sliding door, a little ajar, gave them every opportunity to overhear all that was said beyond.

Meanwhile Dick had explained why he, a strange priest, had come. The one sent for, he offered, being unable to attend, had requested him to come in his stead. And he had taken a position very close to the sliding-door. He had reason to believe that the woman's confession would not be made in a loud tone.

Susan Roylan was all broken down. Her nerves were all unstrung, and a single day seemed to have aged her ten years.

Dismissing her old servant from the room, with strict orders to go down to the rooms below and remain there, the aged woman closed the door after her and turned to the supposed priest, falling upon her knees before him.

For several minutes she neither moved or spoke, but her lips moved in prayer.

During that time Kodak Kate heard a step in the hall, and a hand tried the knob of the door leading into the room where she and the lawyers were. But this door Kate had taken the precaution to lock.

The hand was removed, the knob clicked

slightly as it fell back into place, and the step was heard again soft and cat-like. In a moment Kate was at the door, opened it without a sound, almost, and looked out. In the hall was the servant, just in the act of applying her ear to the keyhole of the other door.

Closing and locking the door again, as silently as she had opened it, Kate returned to her place, and with note-book and pencil in hand, holding the book in the ray of light that came through the crack from the other room, prepared to jot down whatever words might reach her ears.

The confession began, proceeded, ended.

Deadwood Dick played the part so well that not a shadow of suspicion was aroused.

"I have been a sinful woman," the confessor began, "but not a vicious one. I sinned years ago, and have carried a secret in my breast all the years since, locked from the eyes of even my poor sister. She never knew it, never guessed it, never suspected it. She, poor soul, wanted to have our property left to that worthless rascal, our grandnephew. She could not read his character as I could. But I, I was determined that it should be left to Mrs. Pratson, who has more claims upon me than ever Howard Crandford could ever have had, even were he worthy, *for she is my own grandchild*."

"Yes, it is true, true. Oh! the weight my sin has been upon me all these years that are past and gone! The anxiety at never knowing the fate of my missing child, the daughter of my shame!"

Something like a groan was heard, and the woman stopped.

The sound was not repeated, and she presently resumed, this time continuing to the end.

"No one ever guessed the truth. I pretended to go away from home, but really never went out of the city, Chicago, where we used to live. My child was born, and I put it into the hands of a charitable institution. There it was reared until a girl of thirteen, when she was taken by a family and given a home. But evil was upon her, and she was no credit to the institution that had reared her, though she was a credit to the sin that she had inherited from me. I had been evil; she turned out even worse than that. But in spite of all I loved her, for my own blood was in her veins, and she was my own child, though I could never acknowledge her or let her know who her mother was."

"But finally a better day came. She married honorably; a little baby girl blessed the union; she had a good and faithful husband, and I hoped the end of the evil was come. But it proved not so. She was false, disappeared, and her husband was left with the baby to care for, not knowing where the mother was or what had been her fate. He did not know her past. Had he known it, she would never have been his wife, for he was honest and honorable. He cared for the child, raised her, and lived to see her happily married, but died soon after."

"Now that child, the child of my own offspring, my grandchild, is a happy wife and mother, inheriting all her father's goodness of character, with little or none of the evil of her mother. And it was to her that I wanted to leave the bulk of the wealth enjoyed by my sister and me. But my sister opposed me. She was determined it should go to Howard Crandford; I was determined that it should go to my grandchild. I could not explain, oh! I could not explain, and I knew that while my sister lived I could never hope to carry out my wish."

The listeners expected now to hear the story of the heinous crime.

"I loved my sister," the woman went on, "but upon this one point we could never agree. She did offer to give consent that a quarter of it should go to Mrs. Pratson, and I made the same concession toward Crandford, but there we stopped. I would not yield to the half, and neither would she. And there it seemed likely to stand until both, no, one of us had passed away. I was the older, and naturally feared that I should be the first to go. I could not confess my sin, after all these years, and tell her the truth, that Mrs. Pratson is my grandchild. What was I to do? God forgive me! but I really wished that Phoebe might die suddenly, thus giving me the chance I wanted."

Horror almost held the listeners spellbound.

"But finally," the woman concluded, "I resolved to yield the point. If my grandchild could receive a quarter of our wealth, I fully decided, it was all I could ask for her. I would yield the point, and our will should be made at once. It was in the night that this resolve was made. Having made it, and my mind at peace, I fell asleep, and did not awake till morning—that awful morning! I called to my sister, to

tell her of my resolve. She did not answer. I called again. Still no answer. Fearing the worst, I sprung out of bed and ran in, when—Oh! the horror of what I saw!"

At that moment a loud groan was heard, a door was flung open, and the woman servant staggered in from the hall, throwing herself at Susan Roylan's feet.

"My mother! my mother!" she cried, clasping her hands. "I never knew you, never guessed you were my mother. I am your child, the child of evil; I am the mother of your granddaughter; I—I am the one who killed your sister! Hear my confession—bear it, hear it!"

A column would not suffice to depict the scene, or portray the varying emotions of these women and those who listened to their words.

"I am all that you have said of me," the wretch moaned. "A crime made me leave my husband and hide myself from all who had known me. I resolved upon a better life. I got a place with you, never suspectin' who you was. I have been with you ever since, faithful and true in all things. I watched over the growth of my child, though I dared not go near her. I saw her happily married and settled. And you can't tell with what a feelin' of joy it was when I found you was doin' her kindness when she was so poor. Then, I heard you and your sister a quarrelin' about leavin' your money to her, and it worked on me till at last I nerved myself to put Phoebe out of the way to give you the chance I knowed you wanted."

With a scream of rage, old Susan Roylan sprung at her as though she would kill her, as indeed was her intent, if she could.

"Curse you, you shall pay for that, child of mine though you be!" she screamed wildly. "I will choke the evil life out of you, the life that has cursed my own since the hour you were born. I'll—"

But the other had sprung back, whipping a long, keen bowie from her bosom.

"You need not kill me," she cried, interrupting; "I'll do that myself. Mine is an evil spirit; no prayer of yours, good father, could save it from the fate that is awaiting it. But hear my last words. I killed Phoebe Roylan. I crept into her room, killed her with a single blow, wiped the knife on my apron and returned to my own room. That apron is between the spring and mattress on my bed. I have not yet dared to burn it. And this is the knife with which the crime was done."

Deadwood Dick had stood ready to stay her hand, intending to spring upon her and tear the knife away; but she was too quick for him. With her last words the blow fell, and the blade was buried in her breast. Immediately the sliding-door opened, and Kodak Kate and the lawyers came forth, much to the amazement of the trembling old lady, who was almost dazed with what had taken place in so short a time. Dick threw off his disguise, Kodak Kate doing the same, and then followed explanations in full, which it is not essential to quote.

In closing our narrative, few additional statements are necessary. Everything has been brought out so that all the minor particulars are easily understood by the reader who has followed our story. The revelation of the mysterious murder was such as no one could have foreseen. If Deadwood Dick made a wrong guess, it was so near to the truth that following it up brought about the *denouement* we have seen. It was an investigation that would not otherwise have been made, for the proof against Howard Crandford had seemed positive of his guilt. He had been in the house barely half an hour before the crime was committed, and only for Deadwood Dick and his noble little assistant, the rascal's neck might have been stretched for a crime he had never done. He narrowly escaped, and soon disappeared, together with the woman who was no better than himself. Crandall Ingerslee had no trouble about procuring a divorce. A mystery hung over this woman, a mystery in which the old lawyer was concerned, and although Bristol never troubled himself to try to find out the secret, he believed it was a case not greatly unlike that of Susan Roylan's. Dick little cared.

This case brought new honors to Dick and Kate, which they wore modestly, as usual. Susan Roylan lived only a short time, and was laid to rest beside the sister she had loved. Her will held good, and her granddaughter was benefited by it, though she was never allowed to learn the truth of the old lady's interest in her. For once the newspapers did not get the inside particulars of a case that had excited the great-

est interest. And so the matter ended, a mystery still to all but the few who were allowed to know the truth.

Deadwood Dick lingered in San Francisco, even though he had been summoned to the wilds of the North, an urgent summons and one which he had responded to, and where he knew he must be expected daily. He had a reason for staying. There was an attraction he could not resist. In Kodak Kate he had found a kindred spirit, and he loved the girl! She was, he declared, like a second self. In a few days there was a quiet wedding at the residence of Mrs. Burton, and Dick and Kate were made one; as happy and well-matched a couple as were ever seen. Dick was free to marry, and though he had loved and wed before, this time it seemed as though he had found the one woman whose soul was twin to his own.

A brief honeymoon of a week passed all too soon, then Dick set out upon his Northern mission, promising to return as soon as the campaign should close.

THE END.

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